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WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES:
CASE STUDIES OF THE PALESTINIAN
TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR

Mahmoud A J ABUBAKER
B.A, MSc. and MA.

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ABSTRACT

Work Life Balance Policies and Practices: Case studies of the Palestinian Telecommunication Sector

Mahmoud A J ABUBAKER

This study explores Work Life Balance (WLB) in two Palestinian organisations. It argues that the nature and content of WLB policies and the reasons for their adoption in many Arabic organisations differ from those in Western organisations. Additionally, research is under-developed concerning the role of line managers in interpreting access to WLB practices, and to what extent such WLB practices are accessed and utilised by individuals. Based on a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with 49 employees and managers, this study shows that WLB policies involve, particularly for female employees, mainly family support, and financial, social, and religious benefits. These reflect cultural and religious characteristics of an Arab, Islamic country.

In addition to identifying the role of government, and the needs of a female workforce, this study develops a new theoretical framework explaining the role of religious and cultural variables, as well as international networking of the organisations, as factors underlying adoption of WLB policies. Line managers often used *Wasta*, being the political and religious origin of individuals as criteria in granting benefits to individuals. WLB practices are useful for women, but males made less use of these practices, preferring strong 'breadwinner Arabic cultural norms. A valuable contribution in understanding the extension of WLB policies in Arabic settings is offered, as well as cultural, social and religious reasons for their implementation. The study presents a theoretical model of the adoption and application of WLB policies which can be used in further cross-cultural research.

KEYWORDS: Work Life Balance, Family-Friendly Policies, Flexible Working, Palestine, Telecommunication sector, Arab context, Cultural influence, Line manager.

DEDICATION

To My Father and My Mother

Who taught me the importance of determination and staying focused, who spent all of their life to encourage me to do the PhD and achieve my ambition; thank you very much God for the gift of my parents.

To My Wife and My Sons

Whose confidence in me encouraged and sustained me throughout this PhD journey; I will not forget my continuous wife support to achieve my PhD, and children Khaled and Mohammed who have motivated me to pursue my vision to be ever inquisitive

To my Brothers and Sisters

My brother Prof. Chris Bagley, Dr Atif Abubaker, Dr Basheer Abubaker, and my sisters who have motivated me to pursue my vision to be ever inquisitive and all who offered me unconditional love, support and contributions to make this PhD thesis a reality

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter Two	10
The Context of Palestine	10
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Palestinian Location and Demographical Characteristics	11
2.3 The Economic and Political Situation in Palestine.....	12
2.4 Women in the Workplace in Palestine	13
2.5 The Social and Culture Factors Prevailing in Palestine.....	16
2.6 Palestinian Labour Law and Regulations.....	18
2.7 The development of Labour Unions in Palestine	20
2.8 The Islamic Religion and Individual Behaviour	21
2.9 Educational, Healthcare and Other Welfare System	23
2.10 Employment Relations in Telecommunication Sectors.....	25
2.11 Conclusion	29
Chapter Three.....	31
Literature Review	31
3.1 Introduction.....	32
3.2 The Meaning WLB Concept	32
3.3 The Common WLB Policies in Organisations.....	34
3.4 The Content of WLB Policies Variable between Nations	38
3.5 Summary of the Content of WLB policies	42
3.6 The Reasons of Adopting WLB Practices in Organisations.....	42
3.6.1 Rules and Regulations of Government	43
3.6.2 The Existence of Labour Unions in Organisations	45
3.6.3 Competition in the Marketplace and Shortage of Labour Supply.....	47
3.6.4 The Existence and Position of Women in the Organisations	48
3.6.5 The Business Case for Organisations.....	50

3.6.6 Summary of Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices	51
3.7 The Role and the Behaviour of Line Managers in Organisations	52
3.7.1 The Inception of the Role of Line Manager in Organisations	53
3.7.2 Lesser Awareness of Line Managers of the WLB Policies	53
3.7.3 Gender and the Role of Line Managers	55
3.7.4 The Level of Individual experience and the behaviour of Line Managers	56
3.7.5 Co-operation and Role of Line Managers	57
3.7.6 Transformational and Transactional Line Managers	58
3.7.7 Summary of the Role of Line Managers	62
3.8 Employee's Take-up of WLB Practices in Organisations	62
3.8.1 Individual Awareness of WLB Practices	63
3.8.2 Position and skills of Individuals in Organisations	64
3.8.3 The WLB Practices and Women's Agenda in Organisations	66
3.8.4 Income and Promotion of Individuals in Organisations	67
3.8.5 Availability of Extended Family Support	68
3.8.6 Other Cultural and Social Factors	69
3.8.7 Summary of the Employees' Take up of WLB Practices	70
3.9 Implications of the Literature and the Research Gap	71
Chapter Four	75
Research Methodology	75
4.1 Introduction	76
4.2 The Philosophical Perspective of the Study	76
4.2.1 The Positivism Paradigm	76
4.2.2 The Social Constructivism Paradigm	77
4.2.3 The Critical Realism Paradigm	78
4.3 Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology	81
4.4 The Research Question and Objectives	83
4.4.1 The Research Question	84
4.4.2 The Research Objectives	84
4.5 Research Design	85
4.5.1 The Case Study Approach	85
4.6 The Interview Approach	87
4.7 The Research Instrument	89
4.8 An Exploratory Study	91
4.9 The Sampling of the Study	91
4.9.1 The Research Participants	94
4.9.1.1 The MobileCom Case Study	95

4.9.1.2 The TeleCom Case Study	97
4.9.2 The Saturation Stage	99
4.10 Data Analysis	99
4.11 Evaluating the Research	102
4.12 Ethical Questions Arising from the Research	104
4.13 Conclusion	105
Chapter Five	107
The MobileCom Company Case Study	107
5.1 Introduction	108
5.2 Background on the MobileCom	108
5.3 The WLB Policies of the MobileCom	110
5.3.1 Flexible WLB Policies of the MobileCom	111
5.3.2 The Leave WLB Policies of the MobileCom	114
5.3.3 Financial WLB Policies of the MobileCom	117
5.3.4 The Childcare WLB Policy at MobileCom	119
5.3.5 The Social and Religious WLB Policies of the MobileCom	120
5.3.6 The MobileCom Family WLB Culture	123
5.3.7 Summary of the Content of WLB policies in the MobileCom	124
5.4 The Reasons for Adopting WLB Policies in the MobileCom	124
5.4.1 The Social and Religious Factors of Palestine	125
5.4.2 The Rules and the Regulations of the Government	127
5.4.3 The Presence of Labour Unions in the Organisation	128
5.4.4 Internationalisation and Networking	130
5.4.5 The Role of Competition and Shortage in Labour Supplies	132
5.4.6 The Existence of Women in the Workforce	133
5.4.7 Summary of Reason of Adopting WLB Policies	134
5.5 The Line Manager and Take up of WLB Practices	135
5.5.1 Summary of the Role of Line Manager	140
5.6 The Take-Up of WLB Policies in the MobileCom	141
5.6.1 The Take-up of Flexible and Leave WLB Practices	141
5.6.2 The Take-up of Childcare and Financial WLB Policies	147
5.6.3 The Take-up of the Social and Religious WLB Policies	150
5.6.4 Summary of the Take-Up of WLB Policies in the Organisation	151
Chapter Six	153
The TeleCom Company Case Study	153
6.1. Introduction	154

6.2. Background on the Context of the TeleCom.....	154
6.3. The WLB Policies in the TeleCom.....	157
6.3.1. The Flexible WLB Polices of the TeleCom.....	158
6.3.2 The Leave Arrangement WLB Policies of the TeleCom	161
6.3.3 The Financial WLB Policies in the TeleCom	164
6.3.4. The Child Care WLB Policies in the TeleCom	166
6.3.5. Social and Religious WLB Practices	166
6.3.6 Summary of the Content of WLB Policies in TeleCom	169
6.4 Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices in the Organisation	170
6.4.1 The Social and Religious Factor of Palestine	171
6.4.2 The Rules and the Regulations of Government.....	172
6.4.3 The Existence of the Labour Unions in the TeleCom	174
6.4.4 International Experience and Network Collaboration Agreements	175
6.4.5 The Role of Competition and of Shortages in the Labour Supply	177
6.4.6 The Existence of Women Workforces in the Organisation	178
6.4.7 Summary of the Reasons of Adopting WLB Policies	180
6.5 The Role and Behaviour of Line Managers	181
6.5.1 Summary of the Role and Behaviour of Line Manager	186
6.6 The Access and Take-Up of WLB Policies in the TeleCom	186
6.6.1 Employee Take-Up of the Flexible and the Leave WLB Practices	187
6.6.2 Employee Take-up of Childcare and Financial WLB Practices.....	193
6.6.3 Employee Take-Up of the Social and Religious WLB Practices	195
6.6.4 Summary of the Take-Up of WLB Policies in the Organisation	196
Chapter Seven.....	198
Discussion of the Findings	198
7.1 Introduction.....	199
7.2 The Content of the WLB Policies in Organisations.....	199
7.2.1 Flexible WLB Policies in the Organisations	202
7.2.2 The Leave Arrangements for WLB Policies in Organisations	205
7.2.3 Childcare WLB Policies in the Organisations.....	208
7.2.4 The Financial WLB policies in the Organisations.....	209
7.2.5 The Religious WLB Policies of the Organisations.....	211
7.2.6 Cultural WLB policies in the Organisation.....	212
7.2.7 Summary of the Content of WLB Policies in the Present Research	213
7.3 The Reasons for Adoption WLB Policies in the Organisations	214
7.3.1 Social and Religious Factors of Palestinian Context	215
7.3.2 Internationalisation and Networking Factors	216

7.3.3 Rules of Government and Regulations	217
7.3.4 Existence of Labour Unions in the Organisations	219
7.3.5 Competition and Shortage of Labour Supplies	221
7.3.6 Development of Women's Workforce in Organisations	222
7.3.7 Summary of the Reasons for Adopting WLB policies	223
7.4 The Role and Behaviour of Line Managers	225
7.4.1 The Summary of Line Manager Behaviour	230
7.5 The Take-Up of WLB Practices in the Organisations	231
7.5.1 Organisational Barriers	232
7.5.2 Individual Barriers in Using WLB practices	234
7.5.3 Summary of the Take up of WLB practices	238
Chapter Eight	240
Conclusion	240
8.1 Introduction.....	241
8.2 Theoretical Contribution	241
8.3 Practical Contribution of the Research	251
8.4 The Methodological Contribution of the Thesis	254
8.5 The Limitation of the Research	255
8.6 Future Research	256
References.....	260
Appendix.....	293
Appendix (A): The Interview Questions.....	294
Appendix (B): letter distributed to interview participants	296

TABLE OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: HISTORICAL MAP OF PALESTINE	12
FIGURE 2: MAS (2006) AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGE IN GDP	13
FIGURE 3: PCBS (2014): LABOUR FORCE SURVEY	14
FIGURE 4: THE CONTENT OF WLB POLICIES IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION ORGANISATIONS	200
FIGURE 5: THE REASONS FOR ADOPTING WLB POLICIES IN THE TWO CASE STUDIES	215
FIGURE 6: THE WLB POLICIES IN THE TWO TELECOMMUNICATION ORGANISATIONS	243
FIGURE 7: THE REASONS FOR ADOPTING WLB POLICES IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION ORGANISATIONS	246

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: THE PALESTINIAN LABOUR LAW.....	19
TABLE 2: THE STRUCTURE THE CONTENT OF WLB POLICIES	37
TABLE 3: SAMPLE OF THE STUDY IN THE MOBILECOM	96
TABLE 4: SAMPLE OF THE STUDY IN THE TELECOM	98
TABLE 5: FLEXIBLE WLB POLICIES OF THE MOBILECOM.....	111
TABLE 6: LEAVE WLB POLICIES OF THE MOBILECOM.....	115
TABLE 7: FINANCIAL WLB POLICIES OF THE MOBILECOM	118
TABLE 8: SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WLB POLICIES OF THE MOBILECOM.....	121
TABLE 9: MAIN PREMISES FOR ADOPTING WLB POLICIES AT MOBILECOM	125
TABLE 10: TAKE UP OF FLEXIBLE AND LEAVE WLB PRACTICES IN THE MOBILECOM.....	141
TABLE 11: TAKE UP OF CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL WLB PRACTICES IN MOBILECOM	147
TABLE 12: TAKE UP OF SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WLB PRACTICES IN MOBILECOM ..	150
TABLE 13: FLEXIBLE WLB POLICIES OF THE TELECOM	158
TABLE 14: LEAVE WLB POLICIES OF THE TELECOM	161
TABLE 15: CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL WLB POLICIES OF THE TELECOM	164
TABLE 16: SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WLB POLICIES OF THE TELECOM	167
TABLE 17: THE MAIN REASONS FOR ADOPTING WLB POLICIES IN THE TELECOM ..	170
TABLE 18: TAKE UP OF FLEXIBLE AND LEAVE WLB PRACTICES IN THE TELECOM ..	187
TABLE 19: TAKE UP OF CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL WLB PRACTICES IN THE TELECOM	193
TABLE 20: TAKE UP OF SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS WLB PRACTICES IN THE TELECOM.....	195

C H A P T E R O N E

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This thesis explores Work Life Balance (WLB) policies and practices in the Palestinian Arabic context. The WLB concept attempts to achieve satisfaction in multiple life roles, and the capabilities of individuals to balance and manage simultaneously two or more aspects of life, including work, family and personal roles (Eikhof et al., 2007; Glass and Finley, 2002). The topic has not been examined before in any Arabic culture. However, in Western countries, the topic of WLB policies and its practices has been extensively scrutinised and developed. In addition many researchers have studied the nature and development of WLB policies and the reasons of their adoption in the workplace (Fleetwood, 2007; Guest, 2001; Dex and Smith, 2002; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Chang et al., 2010; De Menezes et al., 2009). Researchers also examine further areas such as the WLB practices and gender questions, the older worker and WLB policies, the demand for informal WLB policies to increase individual control, the impact and the importance of WLB practices upon individual behaviours and recently the importance of WLB policies regarding increasing individual engagement of talented management people (Prowse and Prowse, 2015; Crompton, 2006; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007; Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2015). Since in Palestine and also in Arab countries, there are no available studies examining the topic of WLB policies and practices, it is essential to examine the topic from the beginning in terms of the nature of policies, why they are implemented and to what extent are required by individuals and by society in Palestine.

The study is crucial in underlining the nature of WLB policies and their practical applications in an Arabic context, and thus aims to develop a strong theoretical framework of the practice of WLB which could be used in the future by other researchers who are interested in research in the Arab context. The study is also vital because it gives international researchers a potentially strong theoretical background for the influence of social, cultural, religious, and other institutional aspects of work organisations in Arab contexts, and this in turn may enhance their understanding and assumptions about Arab countries. In addition, the study offers a strong practical contribution for national and international organisations that are interested in investing in Palestinian and Arab contexts. It offers a model of the nature of WLB policies and the

associated management processes. The study thus, offers vital information about improving management processes in the context of WLB practices and factors.

Various WLB policies have been developed and offered by organisations in many Western countries, such as part-time working, term-time working, childcare benefit, and maternity leave, in order to assist workforces to balance between the demands of the working lives of their personnel, and their family lives (Bond et al., 2002; Lewis and Campbell, 2008). Nevertheless, these types of WLB policies have been found to be variable, and differ from one nation to another, reflecting the cultural and economic backgrounds against which WLB policies have been developed. In comparison with the UK, most of the Scandinavian countries have offered policies for all individuals at an early stage of child care to increase participation of both genders in the workplace (Den Dulk et al., 2013; Thevenon, 2011). Reviewing the WLB policies in India and China for example, it has been found (Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011) that their provision is relatively weak and concentrated more on family health insurance and subsidising the cost of children's education, as opposed to flexible WLB policies which have been described in the West. This is because of the negative impact of many flexible policies upon level of income of individuals (Wang et al., 2008).

Given that the context of WLB policies in Western countries is likely to be different than in other cultural settings, such as those in other contexts such as Palestine, and in other countries in the Middle East, it is likely that the nature of WLB policies will be different also. Palestine has a unique culture and history, and social, demographic, and governmental regulatory features which are different from those described in Western countries. Palestine for example, is still a collectivistic culture in which voluntary forms of assistance and help between individuals are more usual than any form of state help (Kamali, 2003; Sidani, 2005). If conflict has occurred between working and personal life, the support from other people will often be available (Nydell, 2002). This consequently might result in a lesser demand for WLB policies, such as in the realm of childcare. In other words, this research is likely to present a new

picture, with a potentially important expansion of the knowledge in this area. The unique Palestinian characteristics may also play a vital role in identifying new views on the reasons for adoption WLB practices in the workplace. Based upon many studies in Western contexts, various WLB policies have been adopted for a variety of reasons such as regulations of government, the existence of the female workforce, and pressure from trade unions (Wood et al., 2003; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Den Dulk et al., 2013). The changes in the labour laws in 2002 in the UK for example, increased the adoption of many flexible and family-friendly leave WLB policies (Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003). The researcher argues that why organisations adopt WLB practices in the workplace is still under debate because, for example, the labour laws in Palestine are less rigorously enforced with regard to WLB practices. The twin factors (in Palestine and elsewhere) of an excess of unemployment, together with shortages of highly skilled workers, could mean that professionally qualified women would be in demand by employers; these women would, for cultural reasons, require well-developed WLB policies.

The value of the WLB practices in the Palestinian context as well as the role and the behaviour of line managers are also explored in the current thesis, and from the results it is argued that they differ from those in Western countries because of different contextual features. In many Western organisations, the behaviour of line managers was found to be a fundamental factor in determining the take up of WLB policies by employees because for example, a workforce may be entitled to make use of organisational leave policies, but the extent to which line managers may actually grant this entitlement is variable for a variety of reasons (Todd and Binns, 2013; Leslie et al., 2012; Bond and Wise, 2003). Line managers might believe, explicitly or implicitly, that WLB practices are still mainly for specific groups of women in the workforce, or those of a certain ethnicity and age (Leslie et al., 2012; Bond and Wise, 2003). Given this behaviour of line managers, many individuals within organisations are unable to utilise WLB practices. Line managers in Palestine could also play an essential role in the management process of WLB practices, particularly when one considers the paternalistic life style, and the Wasta (favouritism) principle in Arabic countries (Cheng et al., 2004; Neal et al., 2005; Hofstede, 2001). In this

respect, personal relationships might influence the behaviour of supervisors in giving WLB preference for some employees instead of others. They could also assist the women workforce, and older workers because of prevailing religious and cultural values. However, some line managers may be willing to appreciate the needs of the entire workforce, doing so without any favouritism, particularly if we take into consideration the formal system which is prevalent within organisations.

Various factors in addition, are identified in the literature review which are seen to influence individuals in both Western and non-Western countries in taking up WLB practices - such as, being a male 'breadwinner', a gender segregation culture, career orientation, and job title in organisations (Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Tremblay, 2012; Budd and Mumford, 2006). These factors nevertheless, did not typically exist across all of the Western countries: for example, 'breadwinner male style' was not at all predominant in the Scandinavian countries, reflecting the much greater equality of genders in those cultures (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Den Dulk, 2004). Reduced working hours to accommodate family needs of both men and women, were seen to be less used in France (and some other developed countries) due to the fact that the normal working hours in France are quite short (Thevenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009). In contrast, flexible working hours in India were seen to diminish financial rewards, and were therefore less essential in such a context (Wang et al., 2008). WLB practices, which potentially reduce the level of the individual income, might not be a priority in Palestine due to the fact that individuals are living in a less developed welfare system and economy. Additionally, because of some religious and cultural questions in Palestine, individuals might become more interested in leave policies to look after their extended family, and to follow religious practices.

In light of the above discussion, based on an initial review of the available research studies, it was considered to be worthwhile to explore the area of Work Life Balance policies in the newly developing context of organisations in Palestine. This will prove to be an important expansion of the knowledge in respect of the content of WLB practices in a particular type of culture, the

reasons for their adoption in the workplace, and the value and importance of certain kinds of WLB practices.

The key research questions proposed are these: what is the likely content of WLB policies, and the reasons behind their adoption in the Palestinian context? To what extent are the current WLB policies and practices of value, and effective in the Palestinian organisations studied?

The key research objectives are to provide some answers and insights into the following issues:

1. To explore the nature of prevailing WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
2. To explore the reasons for adopting WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
3. To explore the role and the behaviour of line managers and their impact on the use of WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
4. To explore the factors influencing the Palestinian employees in accessing and using WLB practices.
5. To explore and compare the findings from the perspectives of the managers and employees.
6. To explore whether existing theoretical models of WLB can be applied to the Palestinian case, or whether new theoretical models should be developed.

Following this general view of the area of the current thesis, the following Chapter 2 focuses on the context of Palestine, and concentrates upon the main factors, which could influence the understanding of the development of WLB policies and practices in Palestine. This is in respect of changes in the economic situation, the Palestinian labour laws, labour unions, and employee relationships in Palestine. Some features of the Arab behaviour of utilising *Wasta* (a form of nepotism) are also examined. Many social, cultural, and religious factors such as the collectivistic culture of Palestine and the Islamic religion are also identified, and their potential impacts upon individual behaviour are discussed.

In Chapter 3 the literature review focuses on the concept of and content of WLB policies, followed by a discussion of the motives for adopting WLB policies. After that, the discussion of this chapter moves to the role and behaviour of line managers with regard to individual use of WLB practices, and the access of employees to such WLB practices. This review identifies gaps in knowledge, in terms of understanding the behaviour of line managers in new cultural contexts. It is suggested that the demand for, and utilisation of WLB practices will be vary between cultures, and it is therefore expected that such practices in Palestine will have both unique and culturally relevant profiles.

Chapter 4 explains the philosophical position of Critical Realism and why it is suited as a research model in the present case, with the adoption of a qualitative as opposed to a quantitative method of research. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select the samples for interview within two case studies, of MobileCom and TeleCom, two large Telecommunication organisations in Palestine. The semi-structured interview was used to elicit the feelings and reactions of 49 participants including workers and managers to questions concerning WLB. Participants had varying degrees of experience, function, and family commitments. The researcher then discusses the general inductive approach, and the methods of coding and analysing data.

Chapters 5 and 6 constitute the empirical findings of the thesis. It discusses the results of the analysis of the interview data which are construed under four main headings relevant to the research objectives: A) the content of WLB policies in the organisations, B) the reasons for adopting WLB practices, C) the role and behaviour of line managers, D) the access and take-up of WLB practices by employees. Quotes of interviewees' data are presented, interpreted, and related to the previous findings and theories of the research literature.

Chapter 7 presents the main contribution of this study by connecting the original findings with the findings and models identified in the literature reviewed in earlier chapters. The WLB policies were focussed upon financial, social, and religious WLB contexts rather than upon the flexible policies typically found in

Western settings (Torrington et al., 2005; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Gomes, 2013). There are for example, war hardship support, time for prayer, and receiving personal visitors. This study offers a new model of the reasons for adopting WLB policies, reasons which are not limited merely to the business case, or the existence of women in the workforce (Wood et al., 2003; Den Dulk et al., 2013). This theoretical model incorporates newly influential factors: social and religious perspectives, and international networking factors, the latter having a strong impact upon building organisational policies. This thesis thus identifies WLB policies which consist of unique aspects of social structure and values which inform the structure of WLB policies in Palestine. These factors are not limited to being reflections of economics, gender roles, or the welfare system of society, but appear to have a basis in the deeper aspects of the general value system, such as that informed by religion.

Additionally, this study contributes to an understanding of the criteria which are utilized in managing WLB practices in the organisations studied: line managers often used political and Islamic factors, age of individuals, origin of individuals, gender, *Wasta*, and number of years of experience - as criteria in allocating WLB practices. A fresh picture concerning the level of demand and use of WLB practices is also underlined in the current study. The male preference is for working life and a system of socializing outside of the home, rather than within the family, and being a strong breadwinner whose main goal is career development. The number of current WLB practices did not in fact fit in with the needs of many individuals in the workforces. But certain WLBs concordant with financial, social, and cultural practices were vital for many individuals in order to comply with personal and family obligations. This is, the researcher suggests, one of the significant theoretical contributions of the current case studies, since it identifies a theoretical model underlying the development of WLB practices that could be applied in many contexts beyond Palestine.

Chapter 8 summarised contribution and implication of the current study. It offers a firm platform for future debate on the new structure of WLB policies and the reasons behind their adoption. The thesis also identified other theoretical contributions, including aspects of the behaviour of line managers in Palestine.

Additional contributions alongside methodological and practical contributions have emerged, and these implications are also outlined. The chapter also presents contributions and limitations of the research and areas for future research.

C H A P T E R T W O

T H E C O N T E X T O F

P A L E S T I N E

2.1 Introduction

The present study investigates the nature and reasons for adopting WLB practices within a culture in which this kind of study has not been undertaken previously. Without a complete awareness of the social and family patterns of the society in which WLB policies are conceived and applied, the researcher can only give an imperfect illumination of the role and function of WLB practices as a part of institutional policies in a given region. It is important therefore to examine the economic and political factors of the culture of Palestine (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Wood et al., 2003). The distinctive nature of the labour market, social and cultural factors, the factor of religion, the labour laws in force, the presence of labour unions, and other relevant factors are also critical factors which should be examined (Aycaan and Eskin, 2005; Den Dulk et al., 2012). Before doing so, offering a brief overview of the geographical and demographic features of Palestine is vital due to changes in the birth rate, which are likely to be related to the topic of WLB (Wood et al., 2003). This is followed by examining economic factors, the proportion of women in the workforce, social and cultural factors, labour union pressures, Islamic religious values, and employment relationship questions in the telecommunication sector.

2.2 Palestinian Location and Demographical Characteristics

Palestine represents the south-western part of a geographical entity in the eastern part of the Arab region, bordered in the west by the Mediterranean Sea, to the east by Syria and Jordan, to the north by Lebanon, and on the south by Egypt (PIC Website). Following the War of 1948 and then the war of 1967, Israel found itself in occupation of the whole of Palestine. This remained the case until 1993 and the commencement of the peace process between the Palestinian and the Israeli governments (Roy, 1995). At this time the Israelis undertook a partial withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to provide the Palestinians an opportunity to establish their own Administrative Authority. Figure 1 below indicates changes over time in Palestinian territories, and where the current research was undertaken, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank rather than over all of historical Palestine.

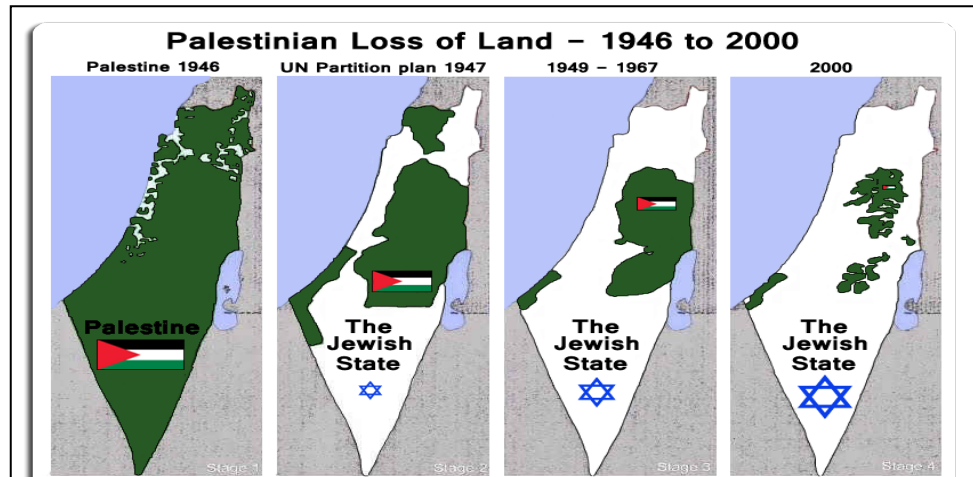


Figure 1: Historical Map of Palestine

The Palestinian population is around 3.5 million, living on about 2,800 square miles of territory. Men make up 51.5% of the population (PASSIA, 2004, PCBS, 2011). The birth rate in 1990 was about 7 births per woman, but this number has decreased gradually over time; in 2007, the PCBS statistic reported that the average family size in the West Bank was 5.5, and in the Gaza Strip was 6.5 (PCBS, 2008). Recent statistics of the World Bank in 2009 and PCBS in 2012 underlined that the size of the family is decreasing and the birth rate is now around 4-5 births per woman. The decrease in birth rate as discussed later, is associated with women engaging in the workforce, and trends towards a more individualistic life style. The Palestinian demographic indicators indicate that Palestinians below 15 years of age represent 44.1% of the total population and the working age group constitutes 52.9%; thus the youth dependency rate is quite high (PCBS, 2011). However, old people also depend on family care systems, since there are virtually no social security or social welfare programmes to cater for their everyday socio-economic needs, and nursing homes and homes for the aged remain a foreign concept, and are indeed not acceptable in an Islamic culture.

2.3 The Economic and Political Situation in Palestine

The main obstruction facing the Palestinian economy is the Israeli control over border crossings, restrictions and control of trade import and export, and the recurrent Israeli targeting of the Palestinian infrastructure. Given this, as seen in figure (2) below, the Palestinian economy is not stable but rather changes over

time as a consequence of the changing political situation (MAS, 2006). In the ten years before 1987, more than 85% of Palestinian imports come from Israel, while more than 65% of exports went to Israel. The percentage of unemployment was less than 4.3% of the total available workforce (Naqib, 2003). At this time, local business and institutions was offering many advantages and benefits including the increasing participation of women in the workforce.

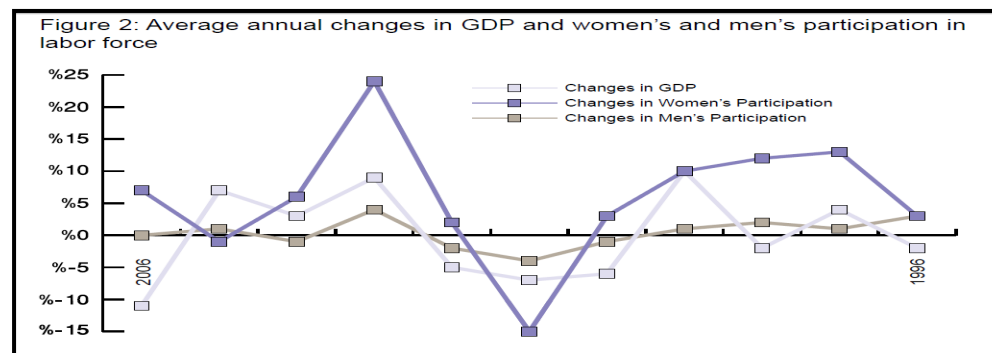


Figure 2: MAS (2006) Average annual Change in GDP

When the Palestinian *Intifada* (Uprising) began in 1987 and then again in 2000 against the Israeli occupation of Gaza Strip and West Bank, the economy started to collapse. Israel reduced the level of commercial activity in Palestine by isolating its contact both with Israel and with other countries; Israel prohibited more than 250,000 Palestinian workers from working in the Israeli labour market (Samara, 2000; Miaari and Sauer, 2011). The Palestinian economic situation worsened more after bombardment by Israel on the Gaza Strip in 2008. The war occurred after the Palestinian Islamic group “Hamas” won the election in 2006, and became a power within the Palestinian territories. In 2011 unemployment was 26% in the West Bank and 33% in Gaza (Abu-Eideh, 2014). These changes had many negative implications for business activity and workforce benefits, including job losses, offering expensive benefits such as WLB policies would not be an economic option in such circumstances.

2.4 Women in the Workplace in Palestine

The philosophy underlying WLB was developed primarily in order to provide from an increase in the number of women entering the labour market in

developed economies (Wood, 1999). The percentage of women in the workforce in the Palestinian labour market has increased over time, but this has been variable, reflecting economic instability. According to the Labour Force Survey in 2006, women's workforce in the labour market was 14.5%, increasing to 15.7% in 2007 (PCBS, 2007). Another study, found that the number of paid women in the workforce in Palestine has risen to around 17.8 - 19.8 % of the total workforce in the Palestinian area (ETF, 2014; PCBS, 2014).

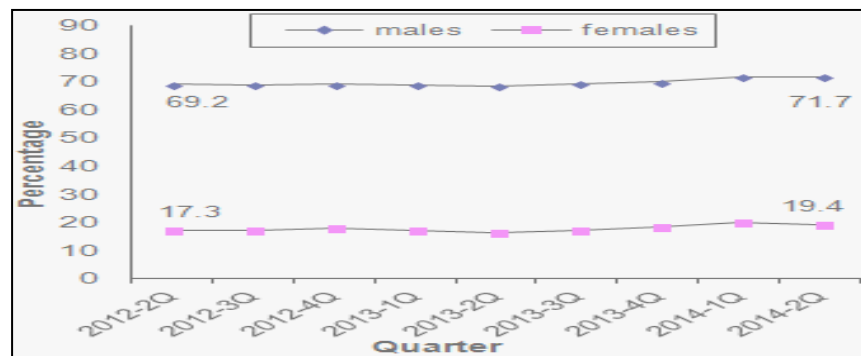


Figure 3: PCBS (2014): Labour Force Survey

It is stressed by ETF (2014) that the existence of women in the workforces is not stable and may be change from year to year according to changes in the economic situation. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that there is an increasing pattern of women participating in the labour market in Palestine; over the past 20 years, the number of men in the workforce has declined by 17.7%, while the figure reflecting the number of working women has increased by a remarkable 83.6% (EFT, 2014). In the Palestinian market, there is now a demand for well-educated women by international organisations, and by well-established, large national organisations, and local education and health sectors; these institutions require skilled people whether male or female, as soon as they have good qualifications and experience (Metcalf, 2007; Hasso, 1998). Given this, the need for WLB policies becomes salient, in terms of fulfilling the needs and requirements of the female workforce.

An increase in the number of women in workforces is also associated with an increase in an awareness of women's right to education, and to work; there are now many non-profit organisations like the Women's Institution, encouraging

women to work, and protecting them from any discrimination which they could face in job searching and promotion (Metcalf, 2007; Hasso, 1998; Jamal, 2001). These political factors, and the fact that women are now becoming more educated, increases their access to, and existence in the workforce. They now have a power of negotiation, and the ability to pressure organisations to consider their needs and rights, such as childcare and leave WLB arrangements. According to the PCBS (2009) centre, the literacy rate is 93.5% among individuals aged 15 years and over in the Palestinian Territory: 97.1% for males and 89.8% for females. Women are now undertaking undergraduate degrees and also postgraduate degrees across a range of subjects including occupations which have traditionally been regarded as a preserve of men, such as engineering and medicine. However, there are still gaps between genders: for example, 6,319 males and 4,922 females were enrolled at the university level (World Bank, 2009). This gender gap could play a role in considering many WLB policies, which are designed to meet the needs of women, rather than of men.

The women's workforces are distributed mainly in the public sector, where 31% are women. In the private sector, however, the number of women's workforce has fluctuated, between 12% and 15% (PCBS, 2009). The existence of women's workforces in the public sectors rather than in private organisations is derived from Arabic cultural norms of women still being the main caregivers, being expected to work for limited hours - which are more likely to be offered in public sectors. But inside the service sectors, women are now significantly present in larger organisations, rather than in smaller ones. This arises in part from the benefits and the prestige from working in large organisations, and also from social and cultural norms of Palestinian society. It is more acceptable for women to work in well known organisations that have a good reputation, as opposed to smaller or family businesses. In smaller businesses, women may experience sexual harassment and feel unsafe at work (Shehadeh, 2000; Sidani, 2005; Jamal, 2001).

2.5 The Social and Culture Factors Prevailing in Palestine

Investigating the culture of Palestine is crucial to this study. This is so because of the different findings deriving from previous studies regarding the impact of WLB on the more individualistic cultures of the European countries (Aryee et al. 1999), including the more collectivist cultures of the Arab world (Wang et al. 2008). Reflecting the fact that cultures are broadly similar in many Arab Muslim countries, Palestine is characterised by its deeply-rooted collectivist character in which individuals are expected to give precedence to the interests of the community (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; House et al., 2004; Ayman et al., 2007). If there is a conflict of interest between individuals within a collective community, individuals are expected to make sacrifices for the sake of the well being of the whole (Ayman and Eskin, 2005). Relatives in accord with these norms have been the main source of material, social and emotional support, as well as social security, particularly in times of need and crisis such as sickness, old age and bereavement. On these occasions, individuals assist each other financially, emotionally, and physically (Hofstede, 2001; Dimba and K'obonyo, 2007).

There is a continuous process of caring among individuals in a collectivistic culture; it is based upon reciprocal exchange of benefits of caregiving between individuals and generations. Many WLB policies such as childcare and parental leave for men might not be demanded due to the extended family support system which plays a major role in taking care of grandchildren and maintaining multi-generational households during both 'regular' and 'crisis' times (House et al., 2004; Ayman, 2000; Dimba and K'obonyo, 2007). Furthermore, right from birth other members of the extended family such as mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law from either the husband's or wife's family make themselves available to assist in caring for the new born baby and the nursing mother, a practice that is likely to lessen the emotional and physical burden that a nursing mother goes through during the early period of childrearing (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Nydell, 2012; Dimba and K'obonyo, 2007).

The father will continue to financially support his children through the stages of childhood and youth, and even into young adulthood, including marriage (Kim et

al., 1994; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010). Because of this, and also due to the Arabic male growing up according to the high 'power distance' culture (which expects that power will be distributed unequally, with males being focussed upon their position within the society), and they are expected to aspire to become well-paid craftsmen, businessmen or professionals (Alwraikat and Simadi, 2001; Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001). Given this, males will probably have less concern about reducing working hours or any WLB policies which are not consonant with their perceived roles in society.

Like other Arab countries, Palestine is traditionally built upon a social system in which each gender has specific roles and responsibilities. Fathers' or men's main responsibilities are to work and gain financial resources to cover the cost of family living and to support the care of children; they are the main breadwinner of the family, and are expected to work hard to give enough financial support for the current and the future time of the family (Nydell, 2002; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008). The father will continue to financially support his children through the stages of childhood and youth, and even into young adulthood, including marriage (Kim et al., 1994; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010). Because of this, and also due to the Arabic male growing up according to the high 'power distance' culture (which expects that power will be distributed unequally, with males being focussed upon their position within the society), and they are expected to aspire to become well-paid craftsmen, businessmen or professionals (Alwraikat and Simadi, 2001; Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001). Given this, males will probably have less concern about reducing working hours or any WLB policies which are not consonant with their perceived roles in society.

Mothers are presumed under the traditional Arabic and the collectivism culture, to be responsible for upbringing of children and caring for husband and other family members. A woman has traditionally been expected to prepare good food for family and guests, even though she is a high-status career woman (Joseph and Slyomovics, 2001; Jamal, 2009). Thus, women and especially those in the workforce are under high pressure, they could potentially need WLB policies to enable them to fulfil these various roles. Additionally, the child is greatly desired

in the family and is regarded as a guarantee of the continuance of the family lineage. When children are of school age, their academic achievement is the primary responsibility of the family and mainly of the women at home. Often times, parents have to sit down with their children to do the homework together, rather than leaving this responsibility to the children (Dimba and K'obonyo, 2007; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010).

Like many other Arab culture, in Palestine, it is sometimes a 'disgrace' for men to join with women in household tasks; men who do housework in traditional cultures may be called names ('light man') and looked down on as being weak and not manly. Not only men, but also women adhere to traditional gender roles in cultures low on gender egalitarianism; women who internalize the traditional gender roles may feel guilty for not fulfilling their wifely and motherly duties (Aycaan and Eskin, 2005; Jamal, 2001; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008). This of course could imply that many WLB policies supporting child care will be not relevant for men. Meanwhile, there is some evidence of gradual changes towards a more individualistic culture in Palestine. This change derives in the main from many members of the society having experienced a remarkable transformation in respect of the level of education, a phenomenon which has been accompanied by a steady transfer of population from villages to the towns (Alwraikat and Simadi, 2001; Whiteoak et al., 2006; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010). This gradual change is also a result of the individual's own sense of a need for independence and a desire not to have their lives controlled by their extended family. However, this change towards a westernised social model is only gradual and, as yet, has not resulted in any dramatic confrontation between the traditional norms and values of Arabic culture and those which might be adopted from western values which are beginning to have influence in certain parts of the economic life of Palestinian or Arabic societies. This growth of a new individualism is indicated by a decrease in the number of dependents in each family and more young people living apart from their extended families (Whiteoak et al., 2006; Nydell, 2012).

2.6 Palestinian Labour Law and Regulations

WLB practices derive from governmental action in developed countries that

were initially intended to assist women to enter the workforce and so increase not only their participation in the labour market but also to increase the available labour supply (Dex and Smith, 2002). Organisations in Palestine work according to the Palestinian Labour Law No 7 which was adopted in 2000, being refined and developed further in 2002 and 2005, as part of reforms designed to unify the fragmented legal systems of Palestine and to create a set of essential laws that would pave the way for a modern legal infrastructure for the Palestinian state (ETF, 2014; Daoud et al., 2010). This labour legislation replaced the Jordanian and Egyptian labour laws of 1960 and 1964 in force in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The new law is organised into 10 sections covering a range of issues; a brief list of the Palestinian Employment Law is listed in the following table (DCAF 2012; MAS, 2008, and see, www.mol.pna.ps/pdf/low2.pdf).

Name of Policy	Description of the Regulation
Working Hours	A maximum of 48 hours per week, to be distributed over 6 days at the most in which meals and breaks are not to be included. Workers may be required to work for more than the normal working week, in which case they are supposed to receive overtime rates of pay.
Weekends	At least 'Friday of each week shall be considered to be the weekend for the labour force unless the nature of the work requires otherwise'.
Leave Arrangements	Each worker shall be entitled to full paid annual leave of 28 days per year. This includes emergency leave. Each worker is entitled to paid sick leave for 14 days per year. This may be renewed for another 14 days fully paid if the worker becomes an in-patient in a hospital.
Maternity Leave	The law grants women a right to maternity leave at full pay for 10 weeks.
Breast Feeding Leave	The law grants women at least 1 hour of leave per day for two years for the purpose of breast feeding an infant.
Parental Leave for women	Any woman working for a business with more than 10 workers shall be entitled to an unpaid leave for a term not exceeding 1 year to dedicate herself to the bringing up of children.
Educational Leave	Workers have to right to at least one week per year
Hajj	Individuals have the right to at least two weeks paid holiday to go on <i>Hajj</i> (Muslim religious pilgrimage to Makkah)

Table 1: The Palestinian Labour Law

There are several regulations which relate to WLB practices, most being of recent origin, in the past five years; there are improvements in regard to the provision of extended maternity leave and parental leave for women to now

have the right to take an unpaid holiday in order to look after children. Though there was much discussion in regard to paternity leave, the law has still not made such leave compulsory for employers (MAS, 2008; Daoud et al., 2010). In addition, individual work contracts, collective labour relations and work requirements, employment of women and of minors (15–18 years old; children under 15 years cannot work) have been amended. Thus, minors receive special protection and also women before and after pregnancy (ETF, 2014; Daoud et al., 2010).

To ensure workplace adherence to the labour law, the Ministry of Labour employs inspectors in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who each visit a minimum of 40 establishments per month. This is an appropriate progress in the labour law but the inspection frequency is inadequate to cover the thousands of establishments in the West Bank and Gaza (MAS, 2008; PCBS, 2013). The Jordanian and Egyptian laws provided for a severance payment of 15 days' pay for each year of service whereas the Palestinian law doubled this to 30 days' pay (MAS, 2008). The government regulation has thus enhanced previous rules: but there is clearly a need for further development. This is mainly in respect of the WLB policies which receive limited development and interest from government and this could imply the limited adoption of WLB policies.

2.7 The development of Labour Unions in Palestine

Labour Unions in all cultures are actively engaged in seeking to shape and to structure the nature of WLB practices (Budd and Mumford, 2006) and are pressing for the integration of such practices into employment law across Palestine. The existence of a united Labour organisation in Palestine began some years ago as the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), and it traced its modern history to 1965 (PGFTU Website; EFT, 2014). PGFTU had long been dominated by political factions and had in turn failed to provide effective representation for workers. In 2007 clashes and conflicts inside the PGFTU occurred, which also saw the rising of Hamas into power: then the Union and its members changed with the introduction of free elections (PCBS, 2004; EFT, 2014).

There are several Labour Unions working under, or as part of PGTFU, representing a diverse workforce in sectors such as health care labour, industrial, financial and banking sectors; as well as the new development of the Telecommunication and IT Labour Union. Each labour Union has its own committee and membership, but they all work under the umbrella of PGTFU (EFT, 2014). The Telecommunication and IT Union is one of the more effective labour unions and was established 1996 with the growth of the Telecommunication sector in Palestine. The membership within this sector is more than 85% of the representative work forces. Recently the committee has elected women, and the Union announced their intention of increasing the number of the females in the workforce, and on the union's committee in the future (EFT, 2014). There is now one woman on each union committee to represent the interests of women in the workplace; this could have a significant implication over the question of WLB policies, and enhance the level of their availability in the workplace (PGFTU Website).

The Union bodies in Palestine recently persuaded the government to increase the level of minimum incomes, and to improve the number of day's annual vacation, available to their members. Following the announcement of impending strike action, workers in all public institutions reached a settlement with the government that gained them around a third of their demands; this was also the case amongst universities and education centre bodies. Similar is the case in private large organisations such as telecommunication and commercial banking because of their declared intention of cutting down the number of jobs. The Labour Unions in Palestine traditionally concentrate on negotiating wages and working conditions. Recently the unions also engaged in a discussion on the rights of women and took account of their greater degree of family responsibility in regard to balancing work and personal life (PGFTU Website; EFT, 2014).

2.8 The Islamic Religion and Individual Behaviour

The religion of Islam informs a comprehensive system of values and ethical behaviours, and governs all aspects of life, including the relations between individuals within society as a whole. The religion of Islam is not isolated from any aspect of social, cultural, and economic conditions of an individual's life,

and the obligations of all institutions of society regarding individuals (Nydell, 2002; Kutub, 1982): Islam therefore will play an important role in understanding the WLB policies and practices in Palestine. In Palestine, Muslims represented about 90% of the population, with the remaining 10% being Christian (PCBS, 2013). As a Muslim it is mandatory to believe in and to practice the Five Pillars of Islam: *Shahadah*, *Sawm*, *Salat*, *Hajj*, *Zakka*; these principles are prescribed in the Quran (the final revelations of Almighty God, to Mohammad, the Final Prophet); and the Sunnah Book (the verified sayings of the Prophet), which are the main guidance books for Muslims (Lundblad, 2008; Kamali, 2003).

Prayer, *Salat* is preceded by ritual ablution and is usually performed five times a day. It consists of the repetition of a unit called a *rak'ah*, with the number of repetitions varying according to the time of day or other circumstances. Prayer is obligatory for all Muslims except those who are prepubescent, menstruating, or are experiencing bleeding in the 40 days after childbirth (Kamal-ud-Din, 2010; Kamali, 2003). The *Hajj* is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and is the largest gathering of Muslim people in the world every year. It is another one of the five pillars of Islam, and a religious duty, which must be carried out by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so, at least once in his or her lifetime (Kamali, 2003). Like *Hajj*, *Umrah* is a pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia; it is performed by Muslims and can be undertaken at any time of the year. *Umrah* is 'minor' pilgrimage, unlike Hajj, the 'major' pilgrimage which is compulsory for every able-bodied Muslim (Sahih al-Bukhari Website). Businesses need to consider these in order to give individuals time to practice and to balance their spiritual needs.

As a Muslim, one is supposed to look after one's father, mother, sister, neighbours, and those in need: this is outlined clearly in the Qur'an. If you are a Muslim, you are obliged not only to care for all of your family members, but to do good works in the community as well, in order to gain the respect of God, as well as of family members and the wider society (Nydell, 2002). This could imply the importance of many flexible and leave policies enabling individuals to care for their extended family. Also the Prophet Mohammad emphasised helping and having good relationships with sisters, nieces, aunts, old people, and

neighbours (Sahih al-Bukhari Website). Contact with non-Muslims which might lead to cross-religious marriages, are discouraged. Due to these principles, women have been discouraged from entering religiously mixed workplaces (Sidani, 2005; Shehadeh, 2000).

Fulfilling the principles of Islam and following The Straight Path which the Almighty has prescribed for the faithful, gives individuals a feeling that Almighty God will at the end of life support the individual who seeks to enter Paradise in the afterlife. The good behaviours which The Quran and The Sunnah set out include behaviours such as studying, doing business, or recovering from an illness (Lundblad, 2008; Kamali, 2003). It will assist an individual to have peace and increase his *Baraka* in his life; *Baraka* refers the achievements in life through the system of mutual assistance of other people (Von Denffer, 1976). This following of the rules which God, through his Message to The Prophet, is a spiritual experience, the support of God for the individual in his or her life. Given this, the motivation of the individual is to become more fully engaged in Islam in order to gain the respect of the God, who will guide the faithful on The Straight Path (Von Denffer, 1976). Even these Islamic practices might require an effort of self-discipline (a spiritual jihad) in order to fulfil them. During Ramadan, the individual is expected to fast from the sunrise to sunset. Individuals should not drink or eat anything until the *Azan* is called. Consequently, during Ramadan individuals spend such of their time sleeping, reading the Quran, and praying to God (Sahih al-Bukhari Website). These requirements reflect on the individual's ability to manage his or her life on a day-to-day basis, not least because the individual is often tired and must pray and read the Qur'an.

2.9 Educational, Healthcare and Other Welfare System

This study argues that the level of individual welfare has an impact upon and is reflected in the practical behaviour of individuals living in a society. Given a high level of welfare, individuals become more stable and are better able to manage their personal responsibilities. However, this is generally not the case in the case of Palestine. The Palestinian Welfare system is both weak and inadequate for the people it serves; the health sector for example, has depended upon the assistance programs and donations from both Arabic and Western countries,

and United Nations (Devi, 2004). Like all other sectors, this is due to the occupation by Israel, whose imposition means that there are limited resources and capabilities within the health sectors. The medical services within public hospital are limited, and often could not cover the basic medications (Shawahin and Çiftçi, 2012; Devi, 2004). There are well-developed advanced health care facilities available in the private sector, but these are expensive and are usually restricted to the wealthy. In some cases, the individual if they can afford to do so (or are allowed to travel) go to Israel or to Egypt in order to secure access to appropriate treatment (Shawahin and Çiftçi, 2012; Devi, 2004).

There are many types of schooling available in Palestine, some of which are funded by the UN to serve Palestinian children, and basic education is usually free. Nevertheless, quality of teaching of these public schools is not high; there are around 50-60 children in each class (Rihan, 2001). These schools are serving children from age 6 until the final secondary school year at age 18. Registering children before age 6, or having any childcare in governmental nurseries is not available; it is generally a family responsibility to look after children before this age (Ministry of Education). There are better educational facilities in Palestine represented by private schools, but because they are very costly only a minority of individuals can access them. At the tertiary level, there are many institutions that offer technical qualifications, and undergraduate and master's degrees in different fields, but they are still under developed (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003; Rihan, 2001). All universities in Palestine charge full cost fees, and they are thus very expensive for most people due to the limited financial support available to students. Loans or grants from universities or government are not available for students; individuals' families must pay fees, and the cost of living.

In light of weak healthcare and the less developed educational system, families sometimes prefer their children to have their education abroad in developed countries. It is common furthermore, to hear parents in Palestine say that their primary responsibility is saving money for their children in order to educate them, and to help them go to university; or securing money for emergencies such as private healthcare. The government gives a "family allowance" of less

than 100 pounds sterling per year for each child of public employees (Ministry of Labour); there is no any other benefit such as job seeker's allowance, or universal child benefit as seen in Western countries. Parents and family in Palestine are the only people who are responsible for securing the future of their children; they are required to assist them in setting up home, marriage, studying etc (Wang et al., 2008; Aycan, 2000). Given this, the family budgets in Palestine are under great pressure; individuals require any financial program which assist them in their lives. Individuals might be less concerned about WLB policies which reduce income and individual welfare system.

2.10 Employment Relations in Telecommunication Sectors

As the present study seeks to investigate the nature of policies and practices of WLB policies in the telecommunication sector in Palestine, it is essential to consider the nature of the prevailing employment relations in the sector. Only a few studies have been conducted previously on this sector of the Palestinian economy. Accordingly, any analysis will have to concentrate on the employment relations common in Arab countries in the hope that these will be similar to the conditions currently existing in the telecommunication sector of the economy in Palestine.

The Telecommunication sector in Palestine was established in 1995 by a public shareholding company; it commenced its operations on the 1st of January 1997 as an operator and provider of all telecommunication services including fixed lines, cellular, internet and data communications services (Ali, 2007; Hijazeh, 2011). According to the 2005 Company report, the capital investment amounted to 101.25 million Jordanian Dinars (JOD) with about 7500 shareholders by the 31st of December 2005.

The private sector of the telecommunication has made a positive contribution to the Palestinian economy (WAMDA, 2009). In 2009 the telecommunication sector constituted 29% of the GNP of the Palestinian Authority and now accounts for 50% of the value of financial securities on the Palestinian stock market (WAMDA, 2009). The telecommunication companies established in Palestine work in accordance with international standards. They all have

established connections with, and interchange knowledge with other international companies (WAMDA, 2009). Together they have recruited more than 3000 employees (Ministry of the Palestinian Telecommunication), and now provide telephone and other services to most of the Palestinian people.

The Telecommunication Organisations in Palestine, according to two Master's degree theses (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007), do their best to have an effective recruitment and selection process through using on-line recruitment. This reduces the cost of the recruitment process as well as assisting in selecting the most qualified candidates (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007). However, the recruitment and selection process is still subjective, inconsistent and often lacks awareness of the key importance of procedural fairness. Selection is narrowly focused on interviews; neither the personnel department nor the managers review application forms and reference checks comprehensively. Current challenges include insufficient guidance and training for recruitment committees, difficulties regarding the efficiency and speed of the recruitment process, and insufficient guidance on the composition and operation of interview panels.

There is also a lack of information given to candidates in advance of selection, too much dependence placed on interviews as a selection tool and little concern with 'equal opportunities' of different groups (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007). This is also the case in other Arab countries where sustainable programmes of training and development are still limited, and individuals in many Arab organisations are still working under a traditional management system of 'a family system' (Khan, 2010; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007). Given this, the management and adoption of HR practices including WLB might be at risk, not being managed properly within organisations, so that many individual will be able to access them.

According to other studies in Arab countries, the recruitment and selection of workers is, in general, not usually objective, indeed is highly unsystematic and is only atypically based on the innate abilities or merits of individual workers. Selection tends to rely on close family relationships and already existing social relations between individuals, a practice termed *Wasta* in Arabic (Abdalla et al., 1998; Hayajenh et al., 1994; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Smith et al., 2012).

Wasta means a form of favouritism and/or nepotism in regard to family and kin, religion etc. This is undoubtedly one of the consequences of a collectivist culture mentioned previously, and a result of the close relations which exists in Arab society between groups of people. In Arab economies, *Wasta* still remains the only way in which many people are able to find employment, or gain promotion, or gain an income increment. It is probable that such practices, deeply ingrained as they are, will outlast the fall of dictatorships across the Arab world in what has been termed the 'Arab awakening'. Organisations are also able, presumably by similar means, to obtain import licences; and through this same principle gain production licenses relatively easily. They may also regularly evade taxation and even ignore government rules and regulations (Khan, 2010; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007). Close family relationships and the existence of traditional social networks also reflect on HRM practices, possibly including WLB policies and practices as well. Normally, employees in Palestine receive a basic salary plus bonuses, depending on the nature of the job and the position they occupy. This in turn has an impact on the relationship between employers and employees and is reflected in the degree of loyalty to the employer (Khan, 2010; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007).

The above should not, however, be taken to imply that talent and skills are denied respect and promotion in Palestine as well as in other Arab countries. A high level of formality exists in the large organisations and many HRM practice are formally implemented and applied to all employees once recruited, without consideration of social difference or family connection (Branine and Analoul, 2006; Harry, 2007; Al-Khalifa and Aspinwall, 2000). *Wasta* influenced policies have no official sanction, and are informal and often partial or incomplete. There is also a concern to base promotion on clear criteria, including the performance and achievements of individual employees. Talented and skilled employees are likely to gain respect and promotion, but again only within large organisations in the private sector (Harry, 2007; Al-Khalifa and Aspinwall, 2000). This might also be the case over the right of use of WLB practices; they might be distributed 'fairly', especially in the large organisations such as those in the case studies in the present research. Budhwar and Mellahi (2006) have indicated the limits of *Wasta* in large organisations working to internationally accepted standards.

They note that economic reform and government regulation have prompted a move towards internationally normed standards such as linking pay to performance. In addition, such reforms have had the effect of encouraging the introduction of a system of financial rewards specifically designed to attract skilled workers, and retain experienced employees (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006).

The employment relations and HRM practices have yet to be standardised in many Arab regions, and non-standardised HRM practices apply widely throughout organisations, with each company tending to adopt an *ad hoc* arrangement for the management of its staff. Usually compliance with such standards is largely at the discretion of the owners and managers of these organisations (Leat and El-Kot, 2007; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006; Mellahi, 2007). Such businesses do not, for example, automatically need to respect the right of employees to paid holidays, emergency leave, or compensatory practices. However, in recent years, patterns of work have showed some changes, particularly in the case of large private businesses. In Jordan, and in many of the Arab Gulf areas, companies have begun to establish a formalised set of practices in the field of HRM. Such companies have argued that these changes derive from reasons such as a growing internationalisation of business, and an increase in competition within Arab countries themselves (Al-Hamadi et al., 2007; Branine and Analoul, 2006; Afiouni et al., 2014). This is certainly the case in Palestine, where there are a number of international organisations and foreign companies that have established themselves, a development that is reflected in an increase in general wage levels as well as increasing rights being granted to the region's labour force (Ali, 2007).

There is also a steady increase in the effectiveness of labour unions, and the administration of governmental rules (Branine and Analoui, 2006). In Palestine, for example, the labour unions have showed themselves inclined to become increasingly involved in the conditions of employment available to employees (PGFTU, 2010). However, so far as small businesses are concerned it remains the case that many of these are in a bad economic situation and their primary concern is for their survival rather than for the needs of their workers.

Accordingly, it is common to find less provision for employees in these small sectors, even in the implementation of the minimum wage. Most Arab countries, including Palestine, have now established regulations to improve employment rights, and for the benefit of both the employer and the employee. Again, however, this is more likely to be successful in large organisations rather than in smaller ones (Harry, 2007; Mellahi et al., 2011; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2006). Because of the underdeveloped nature of the Palestinian economy and continued political instability, the Palestinian authority has not been able to concentrate sufficient resources on policing the granting of rights supposedly enjoyed by workers (Labour Law of Palestine, 2002).

2.11 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to present an overview of the context in which this study is being undertaken, particular with regard to the influence of the economic, social, and cultural system, and of actions of governments and the labour unions. Palestine is characterised by a weak economic situation, under-developed labour laws, and by a collective culture reflected in traditional forms of employment. These characteristics both reflect and shape employment relations in the region. For example, social and cultural factors impact on the managerial process, particularly in regard to role of *Wasta* in securing employment. It cannot be said that these practices has entirely disappeared even at the higher levels of the economy. Such customs often make the adoption and distribution of HRM practices, including WLB, difficult to administer, and in some instances their application is quite unfair.

It is against this general background that the theoretical framework of the present study will be presented in the chapters that follow. Since there is no one study that has focussed completely on the area of WLB practices in an Arab context, it is evident that there will be a need to develop a theoretical framework which fits (or derives from) the objectives of the study and the research evidence generated. The study undertaken here could be different in the model it generates, in many ways from the theoretical framework that has characterised studies conducted in the West. Throughout the literature review to

follow, the researcher will try to draw out the implications of this Palestinian context in order to focus on a gap in knowledge in this field.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

L I T E R A T U R E R E V I E W

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the theory of Work-Life Balance (WLB) policies and practice. The present researcher first focuses on WLB policies as they have been developed and researched in a Western context; then this chapter will explore the differences that hypothetically, one might expect to find in the Palestinian context. This review will also analyse the reasons why organisations in the Western countries may adopt WLB policies and examine the extent to which these reasons might be applicable in the context of Palestine. The third goal of the current review is to try and understand the role and behaviour of the line managers and their impact upon the take-up of WLB practices, drawing inferences for research in a Palestinian context. This part of review will then turn to consider the last question of the current research, the take up of WLB practices by employees. When examining the take up of WLB practices in the Western context, the differences which one might expect to find in a Palestinian context will be discussed.

3.2 The Meaning WLB Concept

There is no specific, agreed or final definition for Work-life balance terminology: according to a number of commentators the WLB is “a satisfactory level of involvement or ‘fit’ between the multiple roles in a person’s life” (Gomes, 2013; Eikhof et al., 2007; Fleetwood, 2007). Other scholars define the WLB as: *“Equilibrium or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life...the study of work/life balance involves the examination of people’s ability to manage simultaneously the multi-faceted demands of life”*(Clutterbuck, 2003: 8). These two definitions of WLB concentrate upon that individual satisfaction in multiple life roles, and the capabilities of individuals to balance and manage simultaneously two or more aspects of life, including work, family and personal roles. Nevertheless, what are ‘working life’, ‘personal life’, and what does the term ‘balance’ mean? These questions are still complex and difficult to answer definitively (Clutterbuck, 2003; Guest, 2001).

“Work”, for instance, comprises not simply contractual hours of employment. It is often surrounded by unpaid activity such as extended and unpredictable journey times. In some occupations such as, farming, there is no seamless

divide between the domains of work and home (Guest, 2002; Guest, 2001). Life also could be rather narrowly construed to imply family life but more inclusively to include free and leisure time, irrespective of family commitments (Clutterbuck, 2003; Guest, 2001). In other words, there is no specific definition or boundary to determine or to specify precisely the work or life aspects. In this research “work” is defined as the time and the energy that an individual contracts to a third party in return for a defined financial reward (Guest, 2001). “Life” is referred to as the opportunity for individuals to achieve their own personal goals in a diverse range of ways, whether related to family, children, or individual leisure activities and other personal matters (Eikhof et al., 2007; Guest, 2002). For example, at particular time the individual could have or feel a balance between his work and personal and could not be the case in other situation even when no change occurred in work and personal responsibilities; it is more because of some sociological and personal matter have occurred. Hence the balance is a metaphor and not stable in a way that can be measured or determined (Guest, 2001). In this research, the balance will be considered within the context of an individual attempt to manage the conflicts between different demands on his or her time, in such a way that satisfies both the individual’s needs for well-being and for self-fulfilment (Eikhof et al., 2007; Clutterbuck, 2003; Guest, 2001).

WLB is an increasingly important concern for managers as well as employees, and female employees in particular. Today there are an increasing number of women in the labour market; in the UK for example it has reached more than 70% of all women of working age (Fleetwood, 2007; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Gomes, 2013). In developing countries such as Palestine, there is also a pattern of increasing participation of women in workforces. Chapter 2 pointed out that the percentage of Palestinian women in the workforce has increased from 11% to 20% within a period of ten years (PCBS, 20014); this increase in dual career families in Palestine and other developing countries means that women to have to balance both traditional family demands with those of the workplace (Bharat, 2003; Rajadhyaksha and Bhatnagar, 2000). They may seek a workplace that offers limited working hours such as public Palestinian institutions or private organisations which provide childcare or child-related

assistance for women. Concern about balance between work and personal life is also imposed by globalisation and an increasingly tight labour market, with employers seeking well-qualified women for key jobs. In this regard Western and many non-Western employers and governments have offered various policies to assist individuals to balance between working and personal life, and thus increase the attractiveness of work roles, including the retention of educated women in the workplace (Dex and Smith, 2002; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Bharat, 2003). This is apparent in a number of Palestinian market sectors - for example, demand of women in telecommunication sectors, and financial sectors. However despite the fact that there is a high unemployment rate of around 32% in Palestine, these sectors have found themselves demanding both genders in order to fulfil their needs for high skills and qualifications in personnel (Hijazeh, 2011). The telecommunication organisations in Palestine are working under constraints of maintaining high skill levels, reflecting degree level attainment, and well-developed English language standards required; these skills are in limited supply in the labour marketplace (Paltel, 2012).

3.3 The Common WLB Policies in Organisations

In the workplace, many organisations in Western countries and also in developing countries have offered different kinds of WLB policies in organisations, such as part-time, flexitime, childcare, annual leave, and maternity and paternity leave to help their workforces fulfil needs of working and personal life (Gomes, 2013; Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Baral and Bhargava, 2011). With respect of difference between Western countries and time of development of this question, the WLB policies were called initially Family-Friendly policies “FFPs”; they were focusing on those policies and practices that assisted mainly women and families with dependants (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Thévenon, 2011; Lewis, 2003; Fleetwood, 2007). These FFPs expanded over time to include childcare facilities and leave to care for children and elderly relatives, but the focus remained primarily on women, or those with dependents, which was criticised by some agencies because men were also becoming participants in childcare (Barnett and Hyde, 2001; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Fleetwood, 2007).

As they developed, schemes by European governments took into consideration everyone who was employed and not merely women who were care providers, although the principles expressed were not always translated into practice. This is because as discussed later the WLB policies are still mainly gender issues, and are utilised mainly by women work forces – in the UK for example, the movement for “women’s rights” often went hand-in-hand with demands for better WLB policies (Crompton, 2006). It was further felt that initiatives should be directed at *“mothers, fathers, carers of adult dependants, and any person who ‘...’...might want to play sport, take an evening class, or put something back into their community”*(Lewis and Campbell, 2008: 11; Lewis, 2003). The reason for this was that in the last 40 years there has been a concomitant change to the dominant social norms of western society, which now mirror an increased expectation that men will participate in family tasks. At the base of these changes is a belief that increased male participation in childcare encourages a more egalitarian sharing of unpaid family work, which in turn improves the relationships of men with their children and permits both women and men to share the burdens and benefits of engaging in the labour market (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). The development of work and family policies for all individuals also sprang from policies for boosting the economic development of the nation by increasing participation of both men and women in the workforce (Lewis, 1992; Bettio and Plantenga, 2004; Hantrais, 2000). In light of this, the Family-Friendly Practices were adjusted to include Paternity Leave for men, and in some sectors or national economies, Flexible Working Practices were implemented for the entire workforce. The nomenclature Family-Friendly Practices was itself replaced by the expanded concept of Work-Life Balance (Gomes, 2013; Lewis and Campbell, 2008).

Nevertheless, It should be emphasized here that the common measures, and vision created at the EU level in terms of work–life balance has distinct characteristics because of the differences in their welfare regime legacies (Aybars, 2007; Den Dulk et al., 2012). Denmark and France for example, are the pioneers of family-friendly measures, although there are important differences between the two, not least the justification for reconciliation policies, such as protectionism and a focus on increasing employment levels in France,

and gender equality in Denmark. On the other hand, Spain and the UK are the stragglers in this regard; they both have welfare state systems with insufficient development of work–life balance policies. In the Spanish case, the welfare state’s traditional support for the male-breadwinner model and its conceptualisation of women as wives and mothers has resulted in the emphasis on the role of providing care to the family. In the UK, the liberal tradition based on the primacy of the market and private provision of care has led family affairs to be considered as private issues in which little state involvement is desired (Aybars, 2007). In comparison, in Chapter 2, on the Palestinian context, it was observed that the issue of equal gender and participation of men in ‘women’s work’ is still very limited; the masculine culture is still predominant, assuming that men are the ‘breadwinners’ and women are the ‘housekeepers’ (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Aycan, 2000; Hofstede, 2001). Nevertheless there are some gradual changes, and some well-educated women are now in the workplace, moving towards a more individualist lifestyle (Peebles et al., 2007; Whiteoak et al., 2006). However, the engagement of women in work is still very limited.

In this research the term ‘work-life balance’ is adopted because it broadly encompasses the array of different constructs that encompass the nexus between, or the day-to-day management of, paid work and other non-work activities. Many WLB practices have been adopted at the present time in Western organisations in order to assist individuals to have a balance between work and personal lives. These policies could be classified under three predominant headings: Flexible WLB Practices, Leave Arrangement Practices, and Childcare Practices and other policies as listed in the following table (Eikhof et al., 2007; Bond et al., 2002; Glass and Finley, 2002; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008).

WLB Practices	Definition of WLB Practice	Types of Practice
Flexible WLB policies	Giving workers greater flexibility in scheduling hours of work in terms of attending and leaving organisation.	Part-time working, flexible working hours, compressed workweeks, home working, job sharing.
Leave WLB Policies	A pattern of work designed to reduce working hours in order to provide time for family care or personal needs.	Leave for vacations, illness, maternity, paternity, parental leave, emergency leave, short-term leave.
Childcare and Other Policies	Practices that assist workforces to manage their responsibilities for dependents.	On-site and off-site care centres, an employee assistance programme, and information and referral.

Table 2: The Structure the Content of WLB Policies

The WLB policies in the table above are the common ones in many Western countries; they are considered to be part of WLB policies as soon as they are deployed according to the principle of satisfying individual needs to balance between working and personal life (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008). Some kind of flexible working practices such as *“involuntary temporary working and involuntary part-time working (with loss of pay), zero hours contracts, unsocial hours working such as twilight shifts, 24 – 7 shift rotations, Saturday and Sunday working...”* (Fleetwood, 2007: 389) will not be considered part of WLB policies. This is because the part-time or flexitime which many organisations apply in order to comply with the increasing market demand at a particular time, are satisfying organisational needs, rather than the family and the individual’s primary needs: *“employer friendly or business friendly; or conversely as employee unfriendly ...”* (Fleetwood, 2007: 389; See also, Forth et al., 1997; Glass and Finley, 2002).

The report of the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI, 2012) indicates that the availability of WLB practices has increased in comparison with the previous report of 2000. This report found around 90% of employees stated that at least one flexible working arrangement was available if they required it. The commonest available WLB practice was part-time working rising to an

availability of nearly 8 out of 10 (82%), followed by reduced working hours to over half of employees (49%). While job sharing was available to under half of employees (43%), school term-time working was only available to just over a third of employees (34%), with compressed working weeks available to 39%. Generally there is an improvement in the availability of WLB policies in UK and also in other Western and developing countries (Wang et al., 2008; Den Dulk et al., 2013; DTI, 2012) but this is dependent upon the contextual feature of each context as discussed now.

3.4 The Content of WLB Policies Variable between Nations

The content of WLB policies outlined in table (2) above is not necessarily the same across most organisations and nations; they vary according to the historical backgrounds against which family policies have developed, which are diverse with regards to the complex array of the roles of state, family, and labour market in particular countries (Gornick et al., 1997; De Henau et al., 2007; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Hogarth et al., 2001; Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Straub, 2007). For example, the contextual characteristics of the Scandinavian countries differ from UK and other European countries in the level of poverty, and number of children per family are limited in Scandinavian countries, and these countries offered policies for all individuals in an early stage of child care to increase participation of both genders in the workplace; there are also limited part-time and flexible policies in these countries due to availability of governmental care for children (Thévenon, 2011; Den Dulk, 2013). This is not the case in UK and other similar countries which they still concentrate this benefit for low income families, with childcare benefits offered in later stages of childhood, with some WLB policies to allow women under pressure to work part-time. In these cases there is less concern about a falling birth rate (Thévenon, 2011; Bettio; and Plantenga, 2004). Hogarth et al. further observe:

The right balance between work and the rest of our lives varies from person to person and the policies and practices an employer can introduce will depend very much upon the organisational setting in which employees work. (2001: 02).

Other researchers have argued that because many Western HRM policies have been developed primarily within a context of economically developed nations,

most have never been appropriate for use in developing countries (Aycan et al., 2000; Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Hogarth et al., 2001). Thus WLB practices are not the same, or universal, over different contexts, as characteristics of organisations in different countries differ given the economic, cultural and organisational settings, and decades in which they were developing. For example, in comparison with small organisations, large organisation may be able to apply a wider range of WLB policies, since these large organisations have more resources and capabilities (Dex and Scheibl, 2002; Dex and Smith, 2002; Maxwell and McDougall, 2004). In smaller organisations, WLB policies were often very limited and applied more informally, based upon ad hoc principles rather than as formal policies that could be available to the entire workforce.

Increasing the adoption of WLB policies in many Western countries was related to increased economic growth, stronger tax base, and decreased fertility rate, involving a movement to policies which aimed to decrease levels of stress, and sickness absence, and loss of skilled workers because of their perceived family obligations (Crooker et al., 2002; De Menezes et al., 2009; Clutterbuck, 2003). Because of the differential level of impact of those factors among countries in the Western countries, scholars found that the content of WLB policies varied across nations and organisations at different stages of development (Wang et al., 2008; Thévenon, 2011; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Aybars, 2007; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008). Sweden for example, offers a strong training and incentive program to encourage organisations in the market to adopt the WLB policies. Such policies are supported (or required) in some countries by legislation such as Labour Law codes, giving individuals a right of access to many kinds of leave policies (Straub, 2007; Thévenon, 2011; Betto and Plantenga, 2004; Den Dulk et al., 2005). In other countries like the UK, there are many WLB policies such as part-time, flexitime, maternity and annual leave policies, but these are less developed than those in Scandinavian Countries. In comparison with Scandinavian countries, the period of paternity leave is quite short in the UK (Thévenon, 2011; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Aybars, 2007; Straub, 2007). This differential level in the existence of WLB policies between nations is related to

types of level of welfare system, fertility rates, economic growth, and the tax base system (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004).

The Labour law in Palestine is still limited, although “breast-feeding time” may be seen as both a novel and progressive WLB. But in general Palestinian law is still focussing on the basic right of leave policies, salary and overtime benefits (see the Palestinian Labour Law, 2002). This may reflect many reasons such as absence of a fertility rate ‘problem’ and absence of shortage in labour supplies. In light of this, and the limited availability of governmental interest, organisations could limit their interest in engaging in WLB policies. Reduction in working hours in France was not included in the recorded structure of WLB practices in consequence of a statutory limit on the working week of 35 hours. France and Sweden offered well-child care welfare systems, and also they have worked intensively to encourage gender equality and to increase women’s work-force participation: through government systems they have focused on many family and work needs of individuals (Den Dulk et al., 2013; Straub, 2007; Thévenon, 2011; Aybars, 2007). In the UK, working hours remain the statutory EU maximum of 48 hours – a guidance that is yet to be honoured in practice in many industries in the UK. In Palestine, the balance between work and family life in terms of flexible policy provision is by no means so well developed as in these different European countries. Similar to many developing countries, Palestine is still a collectivistic culture society in which voluntary forms of assistance and help between individuals are more usual than any form of state help. If conflict has occurred between working and personal life, the support from other people (in family and community) will usually be available (Spector et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2008; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008).

The existence of flexible policies in Western countries derives, in part from the culture of separation between work and personal life (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Aycan et al., 2007; Chandra, 2012). In Palestine and other developing countries, this type of cultural separation is limited, and in a more integrated cultural system both working and personal lives do not usually conflict, but rather complement each other (Aycan et al., 2000; Chandra, 2012; Spector et al., 2004). Also if WLB practices are shaped according to the culture of Arab

countries, this is likely to be reflected in a change in the nature of WLB practices as currently conceived, including new practices not usually found in Europe. In comparison with the European countries, in the Middle East it is rare to find male parental leave being provided because it is considered inappropriate in an Arab culture to allocate the traditional domestic work of women to men (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Aycan and Eskin, 2005). However, considering the recent changes in Palestinian culture of increasingly living away from (or being forcibly separated from) one's extended family, organisations might consider offering some kind of leave for men to look after their wives during birth time.

The nature and the structure of WLB practices which in Palestine might consist of new policies have not been outlined before (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Poelmans et al., 2003a; Chandra, 2012). The welfare system in the Arab societies, including Palestine is quite weak in terms of the level of educational provision, health care system, and governmental financial support for families and individuals (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003; Devi, 2004). Due to this and their importance for individual and family welfare, commercial organisations - as Poelmans et al. (2003a) and others (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Chandra, 2012) argue - might develop benefits such as health insurance. In many Western contexts however, WLB practices have not consisted of welfare benefits which are adequately provided by the state. But governments may offer childcare facilities in a number of Scandinavian countries, where the provision of such benefits by the private sector has been limited (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Poelmans et al., 2003a).

It is worthy of note that individuals in Arabic society are surrounded with a strong religious culture in terms of many Islamic observances which are integrated within the work-life of an organisation. There are five Islam principles which all Muslim should practice in terms of daily prayer, annual fasting, the Hajj pilgrimage and other obligations (Kamal-ud-Din, 2010; Mohamad, 1997; Kutub, 1982). Given this, businesses in Muslim countries might offer a break time during the day for religious observances. This is in contrast to Western societies, where religious observance may not be recognised as taking part during the business day, because it is something related to individual, rather

than to business life. In Arabic and other cultures in which Islam is widely practised, the impact of the Islamic religion would likely be integral within organisational behaviour. This Islamic ethos should also serve to build strong humanitarian relationships within society and within workforces, because in Islam helping and assisting individuals will increase *Baraka* from God: positive achievement and wellbeing of an individual should increase from this observance of Islamic ethical principles (Doumato, 1999; Kutub, 1982; Abuznaid, 2006). This could also be a stimulus for new welfare policies within an organisation.

3.5 Summary of the Content of WLB policies

There are three main aspects of WLB practices in organisations in developed countries: WLB leave arrangements; flexible WLB policies; and childcare assistance policies. WLB policies are culturally grounded, and policies are likely to vary according to cultural context: for example, paternity Leave for men for example, would not be expected to occur in Arab contexts. One of the intentions of the present study is to investigate what WLB practices are developing in an Arabic context such as Palestine, which has not been studied before. Because this is one of the intentions of the present study, it becomes important to appreciate the perspectives within which previous studies into WLB have been conducted. Such an investigation may assist in expanding the investigation or, at least, in not limiting itself to a concern solely with those practices that are already well established.

3.6 The Reasons of Adopting WLB Practices in Organisations

It is argued in this section that the reasons behind the adoption of WLB practices in organisations are still under debate and need further exploration particularly if an examination is intended of a new research context such as Palestine. Organisations in Western countries have introduced WLB policies for many reasons. These chiefly are: 1) Rules and regulations of government, 2) Existence and position of women in the workforce, 3) Existence of Trade Union pressure, 4) Competition and shortage in labour supplies, and 5) The Business case, of the advantages of WLB policies to organisations (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Den Dulk et al., 2013; Heywood and Jirjahn, 2009; Omar and Ahmad,

2009; De Menezes et al., 2009; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Gregory and Milner, 2009). These factors which explained the inception of WLB policies in the Western organisations will be used as framework for initiating the present research study in the context of Palestine. It will be argued however that these Western factors may not be the same in Palestine because of its unique demography, social system, culture, and government rules and regulations. The distinctive Palestinian background could underline new factors, which have not been identified before in the research literature on why organisations have developed WLB policies.

3.6.1 Rules and Regulations of Government

In Western countries like the UK, the rules and the regulations of the labour law are one of the reasons of why WLB policies are adopted in organisations; in 2000 a range of actions encouraged the WLB debate such as the launch of the Government's work-life campaign, first Work-Life Balance Week, and the introduction of family-friendly legislation (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Den Dulk et al., 2013; McKee et al., 2000). Since then, the momentum of interest has been sustained and can be seen in increasing amounts of employment law, most notably the wide-ranging 2002 Employment Act. This in turn increased organisational interest in parental leave, paid paternity leave, part-time working and flexi-time. In studies comparing two periods, 1998 and 2004 such as De Menezes et al. (2009), there has clearly been an increase in the availability of WLB policies as a result of the role of governments which aimed to encourage the adoption of WLB policies in boosting economic development, reducing gender inequality, and reducing stress and the cost of illness (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Dex and Smith, 2002; Hyman and Summers, 2007).

The Spanish case provides an interesting exception to the "Western" WLB model (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Poelmans et al., 2003b); these researchers found that employers were not encountering regulations or encouragements from government to have WLB practices: there was no particular concern of government for the work and family principle as a motivation for adopting WLB practices in terms of shortage in labour supplies or lack of balance between

working and social life (Poelmans et al., 2003b). In the US there has also been less involvement of public policy concerning the nature of society and its welfare systems, a reflection of the nature of the capitalist system in general in America (Osterman, 1995b; Orloff, 1993). In America politicians appear to be more concerned about the level of profits generated by American corporations than in improving the country's social and welfare systems. Matters of WLB policy have largely been left to market forces which constrain individual enterprises (Orloff, 1993; Poelmans et al., 2003b; Osterman, 1995b). Some recent studies however, found that in the US and many European countries, the impact of governmental rules is beginning to have greater influence: for example the government message which was sent through the US Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 "FMLA" which encouraged employers to help workers to balance their work and family lives (Miller and Guthrie, 2011; Kelly and Dobbin, 1999). The labour law in Spain has also improved somewhat, due to the directives of the European Union which has led to the development of certain WLB policies in the organisations (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014).

The willingness and the ability of the Palestine governing authority to influence managerial practices in respect of employment depends upon a willingness to intervene in the market place and to effect changes by means of an efficient regulatory and enforcement mechanism. The Palestinian Authority has tried to establish regulations in order to ensure the provision of basic rights of the workforce, particularly in regard to the minimum level of wages and holiday entitlements (MAS, 2014). Women have also secured the right to maternity leave and to breast-feeding hours in all sectors of the economy (The Labour Law of Palestine, 2002). This, however, is not the complete story, because compliance with such basic practices might be the same as in other Arabic countries, which is usually at the discretion of the owners or managers of organisations, as opposed to constituting obligations, which the government sees as its duty to enforce. Non-compliance with these regulations is most common in small and family-run businesses (Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007; Al-Hamadi et al., 2007). In the case of large businesses such as those to be found in the Telecommunication and Financial sectors, investigations may indicate a certain level of compliance with government 'regulations', due to external

factors such as the relationship between the organisation and government, or other factors; these factors will be explored in the present research.

3.6.2 The Existence of Labour Unions in Organisations

The role of, and pressure exerted by, labour unions have been under debate in many studies in Western contexts (Prowse and Prowse, 2006; Bardoel et al., 1999; Bewley and Fernie, 2003; De Menezes et al., 2009; Budd and Mumford, 2004; Wood et al., 2003; Gerstel and Clawson, 2001). In one comparative study which utilised two different data sets of WERS2004 and WERS1998 (De Menezes et al., 2009), it was found that the data of WERS1998 gave results which were similar to those of Budd and Mumford, 2004): the presence of an active labour union had a positive effect on the provision of specific WLB practices, including: parental leave, paid leave, and childcare support. However, and according to recent data (WERS2004), the findings challenge the results obtained from the earlier data set, WERS1998 (De Menezes et al., 2009). In line with many other studies, De Menezes et al. (2009) confirmed that unions are relatively marginal actors in the process of introducing and implementing WLB policies: employer-led initiatives often place them in a defensive position: *“They are relatively weak”* (Kirton and Greene, 2005; De Menezes et al., 2009).

Especially in France, some studies identified that labour unions have a power in negotiation and increased the adoption of individual benefits in the workplace; but unions often also had a commitment to engaging in negotiations on WLB policies when they saw them as falling under the remit of the state (Lanquetin et al., 2000). Other commentators indicated that trade unions do not lack commitment to WLB policies, but rather lack power and influence in the workplace: *‘Unions overall . . . do not appear to have great power to hold back the insidious processes of the intensification of work’* (Gambles et al., 2006: 51; see also Prowse and Prowse, 2006). Unions have modernized their policies and their internal organization and practice, but ironically they have done so at a time when their capacity to intervene is greatly reduced (Gregory and Milner, 2009). In the UK, trade unions had been able to drive the process from an early stage as part of a mutual gains strategy, and cases where the process of bargaining reduced working time in France had led the unions into negotiations

over WLB issues, albeit often from a defensive position (Gregory and Milner, 2009). Unions are dependent on structures of opportunity, especially the space created by national working time (and social) policies, but also European policy and projects. In particular, the new policy initiatives around equal opportunities and diversity have opened up a space for policy and process innovation within trade unions in several European countries (Kersley et al., 2006; Heywood and Jirjahn, 2009). This diversity in findings might be explained by the size and the power of unions in the UK, where union membership has tended to decrease and the workforce appears less inclined to join such organisations (Hyman and Summers, 2007; De Menezes et al., 2009; Prowse and Prowse, 2006).

In Palestine, the unions might be expected to play a strong role in the adoption of WLB practices, particular in the large organisations. This is so because of the increasing number of members in such unions, as well as a conclusion drawn from accounts of the existence of specialised unions in sectors such as telecommunications and finance (PGFTU). Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 pointed to the influence that unions may have on the provision of public education, their influence on governments in respect of raising the level of incomes, and their ability to press for improvements in the amount of annual holiday enjoyed by their members (<http://www.safa.ps>). The kinds of pressure that may oblige organisations to adopt WLB practices in Palestine may, or again may not, be the same as those experienced in the developed countries. In general, Chapter 2 indicated that the influence of unions is mainly centred on wage negotiations, working conditions, compensation for layoffs, as well as other forms of financial remuneration for the workforce. In addition such bodies may also increase the pressure on organisations to adopt paternity leave, and provide childcare facilities, particularly given the unions' strategy of enhancing the position of women (PGFTU). But in regard to practices that may decrease individual incomes, the unions in the Palestinian Authority area appears to be less concerned about securing the implementation of flexible WLB practices, a characteristic that these unions have in common with similar bodies across Europe. The economy of Palestine remains weak (PCBS, 2014), and most of the workforce tends to concentrate on the primary question of financial reward

rather than on the implementation of other work related practices and benefits; these issues are explored in the present study.

3.6.3 Competition in the Marketplace and Shortage of Labour Supply

In many Western countries, an increase in competition in the market place and growing demand for skilled workers has resulted in businesses turning to WLB practices as a means by which to attract and retain employees they already employ (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Milliken et al., 1998; De Cieri et al., 2005; Kirby and Krone, 2002). The 'poaching' of labour, as we may term it, is a noted characteristic in certain sectors of western economies, particularly in respect of those employees who have a high level of skills that are in relatively short supply. This may lead to other organisations facing difficulties with respect to their ability to attract skilled employees and thus tends to increase the turnover of employees in organisations that fail to offer such benefits (Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Milliken et al., 1998; Coughlan, 2000). In manufacturing sectors however where there is a more easily available workforce, WLB policies are less well developed (Wood et al., 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002).

Some researchers however, in particular case studies found only a weak relationship between the provision of WLB practices and its provision by competitor organisations (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Wood et al., 2003). They argue that such provision depends on the particular characteristics of the marketplace in terms of the availability of labour, the abilities and skills accessible in the labour market, and the level of competition from other organisations for what labour was available. But under conditions of prosperity and fairly full employment, the studies found that such a relationship (between recruitment needs and WLB provision) did exist (CIPD, 2009; Wood et al., 2003). Such a situation provides a relatively good supply of workers as well as of skilled people, and this is reflected in organisations being less sensitive to competitors in recruitment policy (CIPD, 2009).

In the case of Palestine the current study may expect to find what Wood et al. (2003) found when they detected only a weak relationship between need to

retain skilled employees and the provision of WLB practices, when competition for labour was diminished. They argued that the characteristics of the marketplace, in terms of the availability of labour, and the level of abilities and skills accessible, as well as the level of competition for skilled labour, were the principal determining factors influencing organisations to provide WLB practices. Even so, this is not always the case; because workers with special technical skills are still in limited supply and companies in Europe (as well as in the telecommunication organisations in Palestine) they tended to function in a more competitive environment, one that is world-wide in nature. This factor is particularly influential in international organisations seeking employees with a high level of English Language proficiency, IT skills, telecommunication and engineering skills, and similar associated skills. On the other hand, there are a large number of unemployed people in Palestine, most of whom are not professionally qualified and do not have any experience in the telecommunication sector of the economy, and whose qualities are unlikely to satisfy employers in this or in most other developing sectors of the economy. The demand to employ women in the workforce in Palestine may today be higher than it once was on account of recent high levels of emigration by professionally qualified men and women looking for work. These questions of competition and of shortages in the labour market will be investigated in the present study, as will the presence or otherwise of those WLB practices that may be regarded as related to these factors.

3.6.4 The Existence and Position of Women in the Organisations

For some researchers gender is central to WLB as economically active females typically assume more family responsibilities than their male counterparts (Lewis, 2006; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Den Dulk et al., 2013; Dex and Smith, 2002). However, there are still debates on these issues: for example, a comparative study undertaken between establishments characterised by either a high percentage of women or a high percentage of men in the workforce, found that in European organisations with predominantly female employees there was twice the likelihood of those organisations offering Flexible Working schedules and Unpaid Leave, and they were almost four times as inclined to offer some kind of Dependency Care Benefit (Davis and Kalleberg, 2006).

On the other hand, Poelmans et al. (2003b) who investigated the provision of a number of WLB practices, including Flexible practices and the provision of Childcare Centres across a range of Spanish industries found that gender-influenced policies were atypical. Furthermore, these scholars along with others, highlighted that women usually work on production lines, or at low levels within organisations, and consequently only had limited power to influence the adoption of WLB practices (Milliken et al., 1998; Ingram and Simons, 1995; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014). The only real influence these women have in respect of their employers is the latter's need for their inexpensive labour. This finding underscores the fact that in Spain the phenomena of WLB are still underdeveloped (Poelmans et al., 2003b; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014).

Women in such situations have a possibly direct effect on managerial decisions in applying WLB practices, as for example, was the case in service sectors of the UK economy such as the NHS, in secretarial positions, and the retail sector, where women predominate in the workforce (Dex and Scheibl, 2001; Dex and Smith, 2002). Organisations in these areas encounter a high degree of pressure from women to implement WLB practices, which cannot be ignored. Also, in various industrial sectors in Western organisations, the innovation of WLB policies was related to the existence of a higher proportion of women in workforces (McKee et al., 2000; Bergman and Gardiner, 2007). These researchers, in common with many others, argued that, women required a degree of flexibility as part of their working arrangements, as a part of an 'enlightened' system of employment (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Wood, 1999; De Menezes et al., 2009; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Den Dulk et al., 2012).

In the context of Palestine, where the number of women in the workforce is still only around 20% (PCBS, 2014) there is less pressure for such WLB policies. Since the present study, concentrating as it does, on the policies of two large organisations in the telecommunications service sector both of which employ a relatively high percentage of women, it might be expected that the presence of a greater concentration of women in these specialized workforces could

influence the extent to which these organisations are inclined to adopt such practices. It may also be expected that in Palestine, women might constitute an essential factor driving organisations to adopt such WLB practices, particularly in regard to those practices which concern the welfare of children. This is because in Arabic countries it is women who are traditionally responsible for caring for the home and for children, receiving little support from men in such roles. This traditional pattern of life is well understood in Arab organisations. In this very existence of a traditional way of life, centred as it is around the home and the role of women, may well be, paradoxically, the very reason why service sector industries in Palestine feel obliged to offer WLB practices that are specifically tailored to the needs of women. This is one of the questions to be explored in the present study.

3.6.5 The Business Case for Organisations

The interest in development of WLB policies in the organisation is not only related to the rules and regulations of Governments, existence of women workforce or other institutional factors like those discussed above: the benefits and drawbacks of the impact of WLB policies for organisations may also explain the adoption of such policies (Cully et al., 1999; Dex and Smith, 2002). It is clear that some organisations assume that WLB policies may increase organisational benefits in terms of reducing turnover, absenteeism, and enhancing performance. This appears to be the case in smaller and non-unionized companies; the recruitment and retention of staff along with meeting business needs for service provision have provided an important stimulus for adopting WLB provisions (Hyman and Summers, 2007).

The business cases for large organisation has been described also, but this is appears to be combined with the factors outlined above (Wood et al., 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002; Osterman, 1995b). For example, Osterman states that: *“Employees’ responsible for childcare seemingly face greater risk of lateness, absenteeism, and distraction and, if these costs become substantial, it may be in the employer’s interest to provide assistance”* (1995: 683). A key question is the degree of responsiveness of employers to the implementation of WLB practices in order to address such factors and the advantages that can be

associated with the implementation of such policies. Generally, the degree of the employer's support for benefits to be derived from such policies relates to the benefits generally expected from WLB for an organisation: as Oliver has noted: "*The types of strategic responses vary in organisations from passivity to increasingly active resistance*" (1991: 146).

3.6.6 Summary of Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices

The earlier discussion emphasized that the question of why organisation adopts WLB practices in the workplace is still under debate, and needs further investigation. This is certainly true in the context of Palestine, where we might expect to find a quite different set of motivations and outcomes compared with those which have formed the background to most of the Western studies concerned with WLB. In comparison to developed economies, Palestine, because of economic uncertainties in its stages of development, exhibits a potential weakness in adopting WLB policies. New reasons for adopting WLB practices will no doubt arise, and perhaps be even stronger than the reasons for adopting WLB practices in a Western context. This assumption derives from the markedly different characteristics of certain aspects of Arab society from that to be expected in the West. The factors identified from a review of the existing literature might have a relatively weak impact on organisations in the Palestinian context, and so there will be a need to explore whether there are other reasons exerting an apparently stronger influence on organisations, reasons that might be likely to oblige organisations to adopt a policy of providing WLB practices as part of their general employment strategy.

Although the Scandinavian organisations with "father friendly with WLB policies", relatively few have undertaken vital changes in corporate policy or practice in order to make the work environment supportive of active fatherhood (Haas et al., 2002; Tremblay, 2012). In such a context, men's use of WLB policies remains limited (Haas et al., 2002; Tremblay, 2012). Other studies stated that:

Flexible working policies and other WLB practices are now becoming the norm in our workplaces... The key issue is how to implement and operate those policies in practice, to create a positive and supportive culture, and to deliver the potential benefits they offer, both in terms of competitive performance and employee well-being (Fleetwood, 2007:

388).

The above quote highlight the fact that the policies of WLB could exist within the organisations as a result of many reasons: but to what extent are these WLB policies are access and used by individual? There are many barriers in this respect, which the following two sections will review.

3.7 The Role and the Behaviour of Line Managers in Organisations

This section explores the literature on the role of line managers in the use of WLB practices by employees, since this behaviour appears to be one of the core factors in determining the take up of WLB policies. A workforce may be entitled to make use of the organisational leave policies, but the extent that the intervention and decision making of line managers in granting this entitlement may vary between organisations, despite market forces, or government policies (Hales, 2006; McConville and Holden, 1999; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Kossek and Ozeki, 1999; Todd and Binns, 2013; Leslie et al., 2012). An interesting illustration of this occurred in the UK in 2014, when an employee of a major financial company (Price Waterhouse), overtly proud of its “gender equality policies” was successfully sued by a male employee whose request for flexitime working following his child’s birth was denied, despite such leave being granted regularly to female employees. The line manager not only refused this request, but also blocked the male employee’s promotion (Telegraph, 2014). The Employment Tribunal held that the line manager “had a subconscious view that flexible working on family grounds was suitable for female employees but not male employees” (Telegraph, 2014).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of line managers in WLB phenomena, little research has explored factors that relate to supervisor support and their behaviours surrounding the WLB programs (Casper et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2005). Organizational support in the form of the superior’s and the colleagues’ support vary from one sector to another. Such support is more likely to be available in the social and health care sectors (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Tremblay, 2012). As discussed in due course, this differential position of line managers could also be true in Arab countries including Palestine in which

the characteristics and behaviour of line managers could be different from those in Western countries (Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001; Jogulu, 2010; As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006). This section accordingly, attempts to address this gap by identifying (as an initial hypothesis for the research undertaken) the role of behaviour of line managers as a factor which could explain the take up of WLB policies and its consequent impact on employee experience.

3.7.1 The Inception of the Role of Line Manager in Organisations

Most observers agree that over the past few years, many traditional personnel practices have been devolved to line managers, due to the emergence of performance-related human resource management practices and the general trend towards decentralization based on demands to comply with changing environments in terms of strong market competition and the changing business life cycle. In these changes, many researchers have found that line managers are considered to be the primary implementers of HRM practices (Cunningham and Hyman, 1999; Hales, 2006; Hall and Torrington, 1998; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Stoker, 2006). They play a mediator role between formally declared policies, and their use by the workforce. Without the support of line managers a workforce may find itself incapable of accessing WLB and so be unable to obtain the benefits which such practices are intended to provide (Barham et al., 1998; Cunningham et al., 2004; Whittaker and Marchington, 2003; Ryan and Kossek, 2008; Parris et al., 2008; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

3.7.2 Lesser Awareness of Line Managers of the WLB Policies

In many Western countries researchers have found that even if the WLB policies exist formally in organisations and applied for all workforces, they are still often under the direct control of line managers who are “gatekeepers to employees’ access”, many of whom are untrained and lack awareness and understanding of these policies and their existence in organisations (Casper et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2002; Bond et al., 2002). In their study of Scottish financial institutions, Bond et al. (2002) found that line managers often had discretion over application of WLB policies; this was often founded upon

considerable ignorance of both statutory requirements and of organisational policies. They argued that very few line managers, including those with delegated authority, were fully aware of the existence of WLB policies; they also had rarely received any specific training over issues of WLB practices (Bond et al., 2002; Casper et al., 2004). This in turn led to less awareness and effectiveness of the adoption of WLB policies, and many employees were not able to access WLB benefits.

Rather similar conclusions were made by others who found that often, although the formal policy did exist in the organisation, its interpretation and implementation was subject to informal and often uninformed line manager discretion. This could lead to internal differences in application by managers of different departments, and for different employees responsible to the same manager (Bond and Wise, 2003; Dex and Scheibl, 2002; Casper et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2002). Therefore, these researchers outlined the importance of the training and communication process for line managers to address their frequent misunderstanding or lack of support for HR policies of their organisation. Without specific training and information programs by the HR department, employees would likely continue to face problems in using WLB practices in the organisation (Bond and Wise, 2003; Dex and Scheibl, 2002; Casper et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2002).

In the Palestinian context, there is no available study exploring the role of line managers and their impact on the access and use of WLB practices, even though this might be of key importance. The training program and awareness systems might be more critical in developing countries like Palestine, considering that the phenomena of WLB policies and practices are new in this region. Thus, hypothetically to have an effective implementation by line managers requires a full commitment and extensive training program about these policies in an effective manner; this question is considered further in this thesis. The effective development of many WLB practice in Western countries, according to the literature reviewed, is strongly associated with governmental and organisational support of training and incentive program.

3.7.3 Gender and the Role of Line Managers

Some line managers, according to Barham et al. (1998), in large private sector businesses which promoted alternative working arrangements, still held gender stereotypes in which companies were less willing to grant reduced work hours to males, and to employees without dependent children. Line Managers continued to implement policies based on gender stereotyped views, that WLB benefits were more applicable to women rather than men. Women did often get support from line managers in order to use WLB practices but men experienced difficulties in accessing and using the same practices (Dickens, 1998; Lewis and Lewis, 1996; Woodhams and Lupton, 2006). This type of line manager's behaviour however, appears to be decreasing over time with increasing training and development knowledge about the core of WLB policies for both genders; this also reflected the increase of gender equality within Western society (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Torrington et al., 2005). Because Nordic countries adopt a dual earner or 'state carer' model, they do not build on the assumption that women act only as mothers; there are also policies in place to actively involve and encourage women to work in order to redress chronic labour shortages. In these cultures (and perhaps elsewhere in Europe) the combination of a strong public child care sector and policies that encourage fathers to take over the carer role might help women to take jobs and require managers in this respect to act in a 'gender blind' manner (Torrington et al., 2005, Straub, 2007; Crompton, 1999). Nevertheless, and as mentioned above, in November 2014 a major financial corporation in Britain still offered WLB policies to women which, according to a line manager's decision, were denied to men (Telegraph, 2014). Given the pervading nature of such biases, it might be expected that in Palestine the emphasis on WLB policies would also focus on the women workforce, rather than being in any sense 'gender blind'. This would reflect the strong Palestinian culture of helping women; they are seen to be the main caregivers for children and family; men are still seen as playing the role of 'bread winner' (even though women who work outside of the home are also 'bread winners'). Given this bias, the WLB policies from the viewpoint of the manager might be seen as being for women rather than for men.

3.7.4 The Level of Individual experience and the behaviour of Line Managers

Some commentators observe, for example, that “...*all people of colour were more likely than whites to have a supervisors who turned down their request to use one or more benefits ... and the least well paid and those who had not been with the company long were less likely to benefit from WLB policies*” (Dollars & Sense magazine, 1998). It would seem that the role of supervisors in distributing access to WLB practices is often dependent upon the perceived characteristics of the workforce, and were mainly for those deemed more beneficial to an organisation, or who were regarded as key to the functioning of a business. Thus, the ‘traditional’ line manager’s style sees WLB policies as fringe benefits to be offered on an occasional or preferential basis, rather than as policies applied to the entire workforce as of right (Leslie et al., 2012; Todd and Binns, 2013).

Worse still as others have found, supervisors have accepted any excuse from certain employees as grounds for granting favourable access to WLB practices; but for other employees the case was quite different (Ryan and Kossek, 2008; Yukl, 2002; Winfield and Rushing, 2005). These researchers investigated the characteristics of supervisors with regard to race, age, and gender and the relation of these to the role they played in the implementation of WLB practices. When the age of the supervisor and worker were similar, the interpersonal relationships tended to be better. Women supervised by women perceived greater interactional support for bridging the boundaries between work and family; this was true regardless of race/ethnicity. Because women are the primary caretakers of home and family, perhaps women supervisors sympathized more with women employees relative to family-related problems (Winfield and Rushing, 2005; Ryan and Kossek, 2008). The social relationships between supervisors and workers were found to have an impact on the fairness of apportioning access to WLB practices. It is therefore not surprising if such subjective factors are found to have a negative impact in respect of other workers who do not share the same culture, social norms, or family relations as their managers and supervisors (Ryan and Kossek, 2008).

In the organisations in a developing country such as Palestine, as has been noted in Chapter 2, there may an indication of distribution of WLB benefits that rely on personal preferences and on prevailing family relationships within the society (*Wasta* and nepotism principle), relationships which might in turn influence the behaviour of supervisors in giving WLB preference for some employees instead of others. Hypothetically, line managers may seek to act in good faith and be willing to appreciate the needs of the entire workforce, doing so without any favouritism, particularly if we take into consideration the formal system which is prevalent within organisations (Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001). Equally, the Islamic religion may also play a role in respect of fairness since God prohibits acts of discrimination against, and unfairness towards any person; discrimination against women derive from a misunderstanding of Islam, and seems to have become common within Arabic culture (Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007). Such a cultural belief could affect also the behaviour of line managers.

3.7.5 Co-operation and Role of Line Managers

Another factor which may contribute to an understanding of why many employees are reluctant or unable to take up work-family provisions is lack of a co-worker support culture as well as lack of line manager's support, in a "backlash" movement (Haar and Spell, 2003). There is some evidence that resentment by some employees may contribute to a work environment where the utilisation of work-life policies is not encouraged. One manifestation of the resentment felt by these employees is the establishment of an advocate group of approximately 5,000 members in the United States, called the Childfree Network (Parker and Allen, 2001). These childless workers contended that they were expected to work longer hours, take assignments involving travel and are provided fewer opportunities to take advantage of flexible work arrangements than employees with children (Kirby and Krone, 2002; Parker and Allen, 2001; Haar and Spell, 2003).

Others have suggested that the "family-friendly backlash" against work-life policies has been exaggerated. For example, Drago et al. (2001) concluded that many of their sample of teachers were willing to contribute towards work-family

policies even when they were very unlikely to benefit from the policies. The authors conclude that these tendencies emerge from powerful needs-based norms of social justice. Some studies (e.g. Prowse and Prowse (2015) indicated that increasingly it is full-time wives who are expected to be flexible, fit around part-timers, work unsocial shifts and are left with little or no choice about when they work (Ball et al., 2003; Edwards and Robinson, 2004; Teasdale, 2013). As a result there is a significant amount of resentment and injustice felt by full-time wives and those without caring responsibilities who feel they are being disadvantaged by flexible working and not experiencing a WLB (Anderson et al., 1994). A further study by Hegtvedt et al. (2002) found that the level of co-worker supportiveness, rather than self-interest, had the greatest influence on employee resentment in relation to the use of work-life policies. Also, Grover and Crooker (1995) found that many employees who were not parents approved of work-family policies. Notwithstanding these results, there do appear to be some differences between various groups in the perceived fairness of work-family policy provision (Prowse and Prowse, 2015). Parker and Allen (2001) for example, found that younger workers, minorities and those who had used flexible work arrangements had more favorable perceptions concerning work-life benefits than older workers, European-Americans and individuals who had not used flexible work arrangements. These potential differences need to be considered by organisations which are concerned with low uptake of work-life provisions (McDonald et al., 2005). This communication and trust that may build up around interactional support may be a critical first step in helping to make the boundaries between work and family more permeable (McDonald et al., 2005).

3.7.6 Transformational and Transactional Line Managers

It has been argued for some time that managers play an important role in the success of work-life programs because they make implicit and explicit choices regarding the adoption of workplace practices and are therefore in a position to actively encourage or discourage employees' efforts to balance their work and family lives (Hales, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Leslie et al., 2012; Yang, 2009). Yang observed, ironically: *Don't telecommute. Working from home or part-time makes it harder for your boss to know you. Do arrive early and stay*

late ... make your commitment visible by pulling long hours (2009: 65). Managers play an important role in the success of work-life programs: where supervisors enthusiastically support the integration of paid work and family responsibilities, employees will be more likely to take up available work-life programs. This is like the transformational leadership style, which found its positive impact in assisting individuals to use WLB policies and increase the balance between working and personal life. It has also been found to have a positive impact upon work-family conflicts of individuals and organisational performance outcomes - this is because this leadership believes that using WLB practices will enhance individual being performance (Casper et al., 2004; Lapierre et al., 2008; Thompson et al., 2004; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007). This leadership model has been found to cooperate and interact with individuals, trying to help them in family life, creating a culture that builds upon cooperation, trust, and supportiveness of individuals' family life. This leadership style has been found in many organisations in Western countries (McCarthy et al., 2010; Breugh and Frye, 2008; Casper et al., 2004; Mandell and Pherwani, 2003).

On the other hand, and even in "family-friendly" organisations, managers may send negative signals indicating that the use of flexible benefits is a problem for them and the organisation as a whole (Allen, 2001; Anderson et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 2004; Yang, 2009). In the finance sector for example, there are often high proportions of female front-line staff, with many of the higher tier managers being young, male and orientated strongly towards meeting their performance targets (Hyman and Summers, 2004). In this climate the male-driven organisation means that formal policies for lower ranking female staff are often not pursued (or offered). This type of 'informal' policy resembles a transactional leadership style which is less cooperative and supportive of WLB policies, and has been found to have a negative impact upon individual take up of work-family programs (Hyman and Summers, 2004; McCarthy et al., 2010; Leslie et al., 2012).

Based upon cultural characteristics and the very few studies in Palestine and in other Arab countries, the leadership in Palestine can be said to be transactional rather than transformational (Jogulu, 2010; As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006;

Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001; Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007). In Palestine, as in other Arabic cultures, the transactional leadership style may be the predominant one in most organisations (As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006;Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001). There may thus be less willingness to offer WLB practices and less knowledge and motivation to offer WLB practices because they are outside of the cultural frame of reference. In contrast with some studies in Western countries, managers in Arabic cultures may not take on WLB practices because they do not perceive such practices as relevant or suitable for their workers.

Thompson et al. (2004) concluded that managerial support on a daily basis might be the most critical variable in employees' decisions to try and access family-friendly benefits and programs. Furthermore, employees whose supervisors supported their efforts to balance work and family were less likely to experience work-family conflict. These findings, which linked perceived family support by supervisors to reduced levels of work-family conflict, were echoed in a study by Allen (2001), which also established a strong association between supervisor support and family-supportive work environments in general. These studies concluded that women were concerned about accessing and using WLB practices, particularly on account of the negative impact such use might have in respect of their future promotion within the organisation (Allen, 2001; Kossek and Ozeki, 1999). The support of supervisors was not found to be an essential determinant in terms of the impact of WLB practices for all workers. For men, the availability of WLB practices was associated with a higher level of commitment to an organisation but only when organisational support for such practices was perceived to be high. For women, there was a positive link between WLB practices and the levels of commitment regardless of the perceived level of organisational support (Butts et al., 2007). These findings may serve to indicate the importance of WLB practices for women even when it is felt that accessing these provisions may have a negative consequence in terms of promotion (Butts et al., 2007). Another study, in the UK found that line managers represented a crucial factor in determining the impact of WLB practices on the perceptions of employees of such practices (Thompson and Prottas, 2006). In this study supervisors were seen as restricting access to WLB

provisions. For instance, it was found that both men and women similarly reflected a concern about accessing parental and emergency leave provisions in terms of a possible negative consequence for their career (Thompson and Prottas, 2006).

Even with no support from supervisors, the proposed study (given the findings of previous research) would expect to find that women in the workforce in Palestine would be pleased, at least, in respect of any provision of WLB practices, mainly because they have the greatest need for such practices and many would not be able to work without relying upon them. But for men, the case may well be different if for no other reason than that men tend to be more concerned about promotion and personal career development than women. As said before, men in Arab countries are accustomed to place work before family and are inclined not to be viewed as good citizens if they take leaves of absence (Aycan, 2000).

These possibilities emerged in Hofstede's (2001) study on cross-cultural differences, focussing mainly on Taiwan and some Arab countries. Generalising from these results, Palestine, like several Arab countries, is likely to be a society with relatively large 'Power Distances' in organisations, while the United Kingdom is a society with smaller 'Power Distances' between managers and workers (Hofstede, 2001; Aycan et al., 2000; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001). We infer therefore that supervisory support may be more useful for Arab employees working in a larger Power Distance work environment for two reasons. First, acknowledging and accepting employees' family responsibilities outside of work by management would imply respect for the full spectrum of individual needs. A strong position of 'moral authority' by management might aid the individual's autonomy and control over work and family life, which has been shown to be generally beneficial for employees (Lu et al., 1999). This is hypothetically particularly true for Palestinian workers, who normally have very few opportunities to exercise control at work. For employees working in large Power Distance organizations, supervisory support has been shown to be crucial for employees' wellbeing, and far more effective than other forms of support (Lu et al., 1999; Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007). Secondly, supervisory

support for employees to coordinate their work and family needs is, hypothetically, likely to be perceived as a form of caring and understanding from management. Such gestures of goodwill would be consistent with core values of the Arab and Palestinian culture (Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian; 2001).

3.7.7 Summary of the Role of Line Managers

The above discussion focuses on the rather clear evidence that often managers may well not transmit the articulated values of top management, but reflect instead the 'informal' culture of the firm (Truss, 2001); they might apply WLB practices to specific groups of people, or they might believe, explicitly or implicitly, that WLB practices are still for specific groups of people such as women workforces, and certain groups defined by ethnicity, gender or age. These factors nevertheless, were not typically identified in all Western countries. This review of literature has also outlined the common style of transformational leadership, and its positive impact upon employee's behaviour and take-up of WLB practices. However, because of different cultural perspectives such as power distance, and Islamic principles of ethical behaviour, the role of line managers might be culturally unique, or atypical in the case of Palestine. Therefore, it is important to explore this topic in a new context, that of Palestine. Such research might yield valuable knowledge on the types and features of line manager behaviour in relation to WLB policies in Palestine.

3.8 Employee's Take-up of WLB Practices in Organisations

The take up of WLB practices depends not only on the role of line managers; it is also affected by other factors such as employee's characteristics, organisational management systems, and individual interest in use of WLB policies (Prowse and Prowse, 2010; Hall and Atkinson, 2005; Skinner et al., 2004; Bond and Wise, 2003; Hyman and Summers, 2007). This section examines these phenomena in terms of the extent to which employees are able to practice WLB policies in organisations and what determines their use and demand of WLB practice. These issues will be explored firstly according to concepts identified by the research literature in Western countries, which will be

then used as framework for the current study in an Arabic culture, namely Palestine. Those barriers or impediments to accessing WLB practices in Western countries together with the importance of WLB policies, may or may not be the case in Palestine - perhaps as a result of different economic, social, culture, and gender role issues they will differ markedly.

3.8.1 Individual Awareness of WLB Practices

Lack of awareness of employees of availability of WLB practices of organisations is one of the reasons behind the limited use of organisational policies: when a number of researchers asked employees about their use of WLB policy and practice, a significant percentage said that they were not aware of the availability of such practices in organisations (Kodz et al., 2002; Hall and Atkinson, 2005; Skinner et al., 2004; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2002). This imperfect awareness of policies was mainly amongst men, and those who had less family responsibilities; women's awareness of these issues makes it more probable that they would access part-time, parental leave, and flexitime WLB programs. Generally, women intend to fulfil their family and children needs, and so they become more aware of WLB practices (Dex and Smith, 2002; Evans, 2001; Budd and Mumford, 2006). Other studies observed that as the proportion of women employees increased the level of individual awareness of organisational WLB policies generally increased (Baird and Reynolds, 2004; Kirby and Krone, 2002).

Less awareness amongst employees often derived from lack of information, provided by organisational management, about recent changes in policy. There is often a lack of effective training on WLB policies, and poor communication practices within organisations, which in turn reduce levels of awareness (Skinner et al., 2004; Kodz et al., 2002; Atkinson and Hall, 2009). In Scandinavian countries however the question of limited awareness of WLB policies was not found across many organisations, reflecting the fact that there is an effective government and organisational awareness of individuals in use of WLB policies (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003). These themes are emerging in many Western countries, but are in various stages of development, with varying levels of government support for social and economic welfare. The awareness issues

surrounding WLB policy and practice in the Palestinian context could also be significant in the newly emerging commercial, industrial and communications industries. Likewise, governmental concern in Palestine about WLB policy and practice is not well-developed, as outlined in Chapter 2, with limited rules and regulations governing such welfare issues (Labour Law. 2002). Increased awareness of WLB in the workforce could also be associated with the level of organisational interest, which encourages individuals to use WLB policies: new organisations may be less developed in this regard.

3.8.2 Position and skills of Individuals in Organisations

On the take-up of flexible practices and leave arrangement, Budd and Mumford's survey (2001) found that family-friendly practices were more likely to be available to women in managerial and professional positions compared with lower level female members of the workforce. This finding agrees with other studies that have found take-up of WLB practices is strongly related to the competency and market predominance of the organisation (Gray and Tudball, 2003; Budd and Mumford, 2006). Employees in such organisations who have recently received employer-provided training are much more likely to use WLB practices. The degree to which an employee is entitled to enhanced tenure or security of employment is considered to be an indicator of the increased likelihood of having access to a range of work practices. These findings support the argument that employers are most likely to make family-friendly work practices available to those employees in whom they have invested the most, whether through formal or informal job training (Gray and Tudball, 2003; Budd and Mumford, 2006).

In the United Kingdom, the United States, and in Australia access to WLB practices has been shown to be associated with the characteristics of the job (Dex and Smith, 2002; Gray and Tudball, 2003). Thus employee data demonstrated that access to flexible practices on the part of certain groups of workers, such as computer engineers and designers, was greater than for the frontline workforce. Access to flexible WLB practices was found to be progressively less likely as the skill level required by a post decreased (Bond and Wise, 2003; Hyman and Summers, 2007). It is likely that lower skilled jobs

need to be done in situ at the workplace, and that this restriction applies to a far greater extent at the level of industrial operation, than is the case with more highly skilled jobs (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Budd and Mumford, 2006). Researchers have shown that often family-friendly policies are provided to highly skilled workers rather than semi-skilled workers, whose hiring and retention is often based on market forces rather than long-term development of an organisation. Moreover, these studies argue that even governmental rules and regulations often do not directly influence the accessibility of WLB practices as offered by organisations (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Budd and Mumford, 2006). Such conformity with public policy provisions are often made simply to accommodate the requirements of an organisation's working pattern rather than to satisfy the requirements of the employees themselves.

Notwithstanding these findings from individual case studies, O'Brien and Shemilt (2003) argue that in general, the level of accessibility and take-up of WLB practices was sufficient to conform with national and EU policy and directives. This finding derives from their comprehensive study in Europe and other developed countries where they found that parental leave, along with other WLB benefits in Nordic countries such as Sweden, was excellent (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003). They also found that parental leave policy usually pertained in four key areas: a) where parental leave includes a designated paternal quota, b) where there is a high level of wage compensation for sickness etc., c) where there is flexibility in the way leave can be used by couples, and d) where male provision is publicised through government awareness campaigns. Palestine and other developing countries may be expected to differ markedly on the above four criteria for evaluating WLB policy and practice. WLB practices are still under development in Arab countries and while it remains the agenda of Arab governments to enhance accessibility to WLB practices, this still remains an aspiration rather than a reality. Organisations are more interested in surviving in a bad economic situation, one that may allow them to offer access to WLB practices to only certain groups of people.

3.8.3 The WLB Practices and Women's Agenda in Organisations

In many Western countries, studies have shown the take up of WLB policies by individuals was limited, primarily because the employer's reason for adopting such practices was still focused on particular groups such as the size of the women workforce (Sheridan, 2004; Allen, 2001; Gray and Tudball, 2003). These authors emphasized that these policies are indeed oriented to women who have children. And HR departments emphasize such policies, for both recruitment, and public relations. Thus women were found to be more likely to get permanent part-time work in their current workplace than were men (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Evans, 2001; Allen, 2001).

Provisions targeted specifically at men, such as paternity leave, may help foster a greater sharing of occupational and social responsibilities between men and women (Hobson, 2002; Dickens, 1998). European evidence concerning the introduction of WLB policies rather than Family-Friendly policies, suggests that offering longer periods of parental leave and the use of it by male employees remains low. A review of men's use of family-friendly employment provisions argues that men still encounter barriers which hindered their use of WLB policies. There is still a limited welfare infrastructure for supporting equal gender, and availability of good childcare facilities (Bittman et al., 2004; Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Fagnani et al., 2004; Sheridan, 2004). That is, although work-life policies are ostensibly gender-neutral, in practice they revolve around facilitating the working conditions of women (Strachan and Burgess, 1998; Charlesworth, 1997).

Some studies have outlined changes, of increasing male use of WLB policies as related to personal and family issues, but still the cases are limited in many organisations in the UK, for example (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Crompton, 2006; Burnett et al., 2010). In other Western contexts, and especially in highly developed welfare systems of Scandinavian countries, the issue of WLB policies for women's workforce is more balanced: both genders could access and use these policies (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Crompton, 2006). Hochschild (1997) found in her well-known study of an American corporation that there were increasing similarities in the way in which men and women

regarded work and home life. She suggested that, in the past, the home was seen as a haven from which (male) workers could escape from the unpleasant world of paid work to relax and be appreciated. Now, both men and women regard home as an additional place of work, while the workplace is often seen as a haven (indicated by her subtitle 'when work becomes home and home becomes work').

The question of workplace work-life benefits that favour women has been examined in a number of developing countries such as India, China, and Nigeria, and it has been found that business, commercial and manufacturing organisations still saw and discussed the question of WLB policies from the perspective of 'women and family needs' (Baral and Bhargava, 2011; Wang et al., 2008; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007). Hypothetically too, this will contrast with the Palestinian case, where there is still strong gender segregation in society in which the exchange of roles between genders is limited, and women's socially prescribed roles revolve mainly around family and children. These role prescriptions exist even if women have no dependent children; they are still the main persons responsible for a range of family matters (Omair, 2008; Jamal, 2009; Metcalfe, 2007; Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010).

3.8.4 Income and Promotion of Individuals in Organisations

The income and career development of individuals has also been found to be one reason behind the degree of take-up of WLB policies by individuals (Sheridan, 2004; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Burnett et al., 2010; Hochschild, 1997; Kirby and Krone, 2002). These researchers found that lower frequency of individuals taking up WLB practices, and specially flexible policies was because of their concern about reducing levels of income and promotion in the organisation: the more a worker (usually male) uses flexible policies, the more that individual is likely to reduce the ultimate level of income and promotion (Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Burnett et al., 2010). Within organisational cultures which are based upon loyalty and commitment of the individual worker, individuals (particularly men) were found to be less interested in using flexible policies. Men in all of the cultures studied by researchers preferred (or were obliged) to work long hours to fulfil the culturally required objectives in

promotion and earning more. In contrast, women often work in part-time roles (Kirby and Krone, 2002; Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Allen and Russell, 1999; Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999).

In the US and Australia, there is a high proportion of full-time employed mothers preferring part-time work, but there was also a significant percentage who did not do so, because of the 'diminished career consequences' associated with working part-time (Drago and Tseng, 2003; De Vaus and Wolcott, 1997; Probert, 1996; Prowse and Prowse, 2010). In developing countries, and this might also be the case in Palestine, concern about income and promotion in organisations has a vital focus for men. At present Palestine is enduring a very weak economic situation, and the job market is very limited (PCBS, 2014). Given this, and along with some other male cultural factors of progressing and developing in employment as a main concern, accessing WLB will have low salience. Men might be looking at policies which would increase income levels and boost welfare systems which effectively both subsidize income and provide family support, such as overtime working systems, assistance with care for children, health insurance, educational programme and other similar provisions. These could be among the most important policies for individuals in organisations in developing countries as researchers have underlined, in Kenya, India, and China (Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011).

3.8.5 Availability of Extended Family Support

In many Western countries, the take-up of WLB practices has a strong relationship with support which individuals have from relatives; research has found that the rate of employee take-up of flexibility WLB practices increased when both partners in a marriage worked. Correspondingly, the engagement of only one person in employment was found to correlate with a marked reduction in the use of commercial childcare (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999; Robinson et al., 2003). This may well be because childcare is costly, and so saving money becomes more important than any additional earnings which a wife may be expected to bring to a family. However, with increasing attendance of women in the external workforce and the limited existence of extended family culture in most of Western countries, when both husband and wife are engaged in the

workforce, several studies indicate that the take-up of WLB practices increased in respect of support for childcare, as well as for employment practices which reduced working hours (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999; Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009).

These findings correspond with those of Wang et al. (2008) where, in developing countries support from the extended family was used to supplement or replace WLB practices intended to support employees in their working life. This type of cultural setting strongly influences the take-up of WLB practices by employees, with a preference for practices such as leave arrangements and financial provision, rather than those of childcare or flexible working. Similar patterns might be expected in Palestine, but we should not expect this to be the case with all aspects of the working population. In the case where women are engaged in the labour market and their male partner is not, access to both flexible practices and childcare facilities is still likely to be in demand. As Chapter 2 noted, men in Arab countries are not expected to, nor are they particularly competent at, caring for children, shopping or cooking, and so on.

3.8.6 Other Cultural and Social Factors

The use of, and importance of, leave policies could vary between national cultures. In many Western countries, Parental and Paternity Leave has been requested or used by men to assist and help their wives during and after birth. Such benefits are available through enacted Labour Law and could amount to six months or more. In Western countries these laws reflect an increasing attention towards the engagement of both genders in family life (Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009; O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003). These researchers indicate however that the interest in or availability of such policies could be limited in other cultures. For example, *"the debate around parental leave among policy makers in Africa is nothing more than a deafening silence"* (Smit, 2011: 16). Only 12 countries in the region provided fathers at least some time off work. And only three countries, (Mauritius, Uganda, and Tanzania), recognised paternity leave in its 'pure' form. The other nine countries surveyed had special multi-purpose leave provisions, which could potentially be used by fathers as paternity leave (Smit, 2011). This could indicate the limited demand and use of

paternity leave, probably reflecting the male dominated culture in which women working in business and professional roles is relatively rare. This might also pertain in Palestine.

The exploratory study of WLB policy and practice in Palestine may reflect or replicate some of the findings of previous researchers, who have studied organisations in both Western and developing countries (Smit, 2011; Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009). But it is not possible to say, on an a priori basis, how for instance issues of paternal leave might be regarded and used in for example, the emerging telecommunications industry of Palestine. Furthermore, cultural factors within the Palestinian context could influence the development and acceptance of some policies more strongly than in many Western contexts. WLB policy and practice reflecting both the practices of the Islamic religion, as well as the moral teachings of the Holy Qur'an, and the Hadith of the Blessed Prophet, may well emerge in this exploratory study of Palestinian organisations, and, paradoxically, certain WLB practices could be accessible to the entire workforces rather than just specific groups, precisely because such provision has the support of religious sanction. Chapter 2 indicated the pressure on the Palestinian workforce to comply with the requirements and demands of traditional social relations. Such traditional patterns of life could increase the pressure on organisations to enable the workforce to be allowed to access WLB practices.

3.8.7 Summary of the Employees' Take up of WLB Practices

The research literature reviewed indicates that there are a number of barriers that inhibit the use of WLB practices by employees. Workforce access to and use of WLB practices was interrelated with some individual characteristics, such as gender and prevailing norms surrounding gender roles. In Palestine the situation might also be the same, given that WLB practices are new phenomena in the Palestinian market. There are important values for employees influencing how they may utilize WLB practices; this take-up varies according to worker's status, age and gender. For men, for example the interest in part-time working was limited because of the likely impact on their financial situation as well as their promotion and role development within an organisation. In Palestine with

its unique characteristic there might be different preference regarding WLB practices by employees. Given the above findings, and the fact that WLB policy and practice is in a state of dynamic change in Western countries, reflecting both economic cycles and changing gender statuses and family functions, and the finding that WLB policy and practice is also culturally influenced, it is not possible to make a firm set of hypotheses about WLB in Palestine. However, analysis of the Palestinian context may well serve to highlight the influential factors associated with the take-up and use of WLB practices. In addition the research enquiry proposed may serve to provide an indication of the nature of the preferences of a workforce in a developing region, in respect of which practices they deem to be the most essential and appropriate. The most preferred WLB practices may well differ markedly from those which we might expect to find in developed countries. These themes, along with others, will be investigated by the present exploratory study.

3.9 Implications of the Literature and the Research Gap

An examination of the literature has indicated the need for further studies in respect of several questions. It has found that the structure of WLB practices may not be the same across different cultural and organisational contexts. This in turn will entail an investigation into the theoretical models of WLB practices as they apply in Palestine, and investigation of what we might expect to differ markedly from the established Western picture, in particular regarding the different economic and cultural characteristics prevailing in Palestine. Furthermore, any study must focus on the availability of WLB practices in organisations. There are already many levels and types of explanation as to why organisations seek to adopt WLB practices. These include, the presence of women in the workforce, governmental regulation, the existence of labour unions, and the characteristic of the workforce as well as their capabilities. However, there are competing viewpoints with regard to the conditions which have a bearing on the provision of WLB practice, implying that any research must first focus not merely from the point of view of their efficacy but also theoretically, which is to say, from the point of view of what might constitute the 'best fit' of such practices in a new context that is socially and culturally different from contexts studied hitherto. For instance, governmental rules and regulations

may be expected to be weak in Palestine, but cultural or religious differences may explain practices which do not exist in a Western context.

The study proposed needs to examine employee accessibility to WLB practices, a factor which has received only limited consideration in developing and developed countries alike. In this regard, the above analysis of literature has already highlighted the limited accessibility of WLB practices in respect of particular groups of workers, particularly those who are professionals or female members of the workforce. In Palestine any investigation may be expected to exemplify differences in respect of the accessibility of WLB practices in regard to a large section of the workforce. This is also the case in respect of usage of WLB practices, since our preliminary investigation (the literature review) has served to highlight some of the determinant factors which influence a workforce to make use of WLB practices. For example, the characteristics of workforce are not separate from the use of and preference for certain WLB practices. There is, in particular, the question of why men are less interested in making use of such provision as flexible working practices, a question which must seek to address the traditional role of men in Arab society.

Line managers and supervisors are an essential part of the process both in terms of the recognition, and the take-up of WLB practices. The analysis has already pointed to the role of such individuals in the distribution of WLB practices and their consequent impact on the levels of employee commitment and satisfaction. This review has identified the existence of contradictory views in regard to what role line managers and supervisors play in regard to the take-up of WLB practices. Further study is required as to what influence cultural patterns and ingrained attitudes might have on the behaviour of line managers and supervisors, particularly in respect of encouraging the use of WLB practices. For instance, women in Arab society may have fewer concerns in respect of accessing support since it is culturally acknowledged that they have many more social responsibilities than men, and considerations of promotion are of less concern. To summarise: the present study proposes the following areas for the proposed research:

1. To explore the nature of prevailing WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
2. To explore the reasons for adopting WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
3. To explore the role and the behaviour of line managers and their impact on the use of WLB practices in Palestine's Telecommunication industry in particular.
4. To explore the factors influencing the Palestinian employees in accessing and using WLB practices.
5. To explore and compare the findings from the perspectives of the managers and employees
6. To explore whether existing theoretical models of WLB can be applied to the Palestinian case, or whether new theoretical models should be developed.

The studies reviewed above have used a variety of methodologies in arriving at their conclusions: purely quantitative surveys; random sampling of organisations, with the use of both questionnaires and interviews; comprehensive case studies of organisations; and a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods (Chang et al., 2010). These studies are still somewhat constrained by their methodologies however. For example, the development and use of scales to measure key variables such as work-life conflict/interference, balance or culture was rather ad hoc for a substantial number of studies reviewed. Further, more than 10% of studies did not provide enough information about measurement to ascertain the validity of the corresponding findings (Chang et al., 2010). It is also clear that many International journals have favoured qualitative approaches with a stronger emphasis on the perspectives of women. Despite these distinctions in focus, work-life balance research has the potential to be further expanded and developed, particularly in non-industrialized countries with a greater emphasis placed on cross-cultural comparisons of phenomena. Further, even with the recent increase in studies across more diverse disciplinary areas, we know relatively little about work and family issues for single and same-sex parent families (Chang et al., 2010). Since the present research is exploratory, and will

be carried out in a culture in which WLB have not been previously investigated, and since no firm hypotheses can be adduced from the literature reviewed, the implied methodology must be qualitative in nature, exploratory of the phenomena under consideration. It is to these issues that the researcher now turns.

C H A P T E R F O U R

R E S E A R C H M E T H O D O L O G Y

4.1 Introduction

This chapter has a number of aims: firstly, a statement of the main philosophical assumptions utilised in order to make sense of the topic, particularly in terms of the method of Critical Realism as opposed to that of Positivism or Social Constructivism; secondly, to identify the implications of Critical Realism for the adoption of a qualitative approach to research as opposed to a quantitatively based methodology; thirdly, drawing on both this and the literature review, the outlining of the research question itself and its objectives; fourthly, a determination of the essential features of the qualitative approach to be adopted in relation to this research strategy and the study sample; and, finally, a consideration of the method of data collection to be adopted and the means by which this data is to be analysed. A consideration of questions concerning the evaluation of the research, and the ethics entailed by the study will also be addressed.

4.2 The Philosophical Perspective of the Study

Any researcher should make clear at the outset any preferences they may have in terms of how to construe the shape of the social world they are investigating. This is of particular importance given that all approaches to social science are based upon some set of interrelated assumptions regarding the ontology (the being) and the epistemology (the means of knowing) of that which they seek to study (Benton and Craib, 2001). The present research will focus on the Critical Realism as the most appropriate philosophical model from which to derive an understanding of the reality of the phenomena being investigated. Some of the philosophical perspectives of Positivism and Social Constructivism will also be reviewed in order to highlight the limitations of such approaches in regards to the investigation at hand.

4.2.1 The Positivism Paradigm

The Positivism paradigm is often called the 'traditional' or 'experimental' paradigm. It is characterised by a rejection of metaphysics, where knowledge of anything beyond what is to be observed or that can be measured is deemed either impossible, profoundly difficult or irrelevant (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Bryman, 2008). Positivism regards the social world as something that is capable

of being objectively observed and objectively measured. From the point of view of the Positivists, the reality of the social world is considered to be external to and independent of the observer (Crotty, 1998; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). The implications of such an approach for the study of WLB practices is that the proper *objects* to be studied are extant, real *entities* such as the structure of the trade union movement, the social norms and values of society, as well as the rules and regulations that govern that society.

The acceptance of a limited range of 'objects' in the *ontology* of the Positivism Paradigm leads to a narrow *epistemology*, one focused on direct observation (Creswell, 2009). Because the Positivism paradigm relies on existing objectives in order to present its picture of social reality, the Positivist is obliged to employ pre-existing theory within known and given boundaries, boundaries that may for example, be applicable in a western context but which may well fail to represent the conditions to be found in a different context such as Palestine (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). This limitation creates considerable difficulties for any researcher; when the presumptions of Positivism are international and trans-cultural (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2006). The theory of the content of WLB policies in Western countries is not necessarily applicable to the same phenomena in developing countries, which for example have limited concerns about flexible policies - and so developing upon existing theory may well be inadequate (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b; Kiessling and Harvey, 2005).

4.2.2 The Social Constructivism Paradigm

For the Social Constructivist, there are no natural laws of society, or *a priori* axioms of economics, or a given set of political presuppositions, or any objective norms and values that exist independently from acting human agents (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Harding, 2004). The 'subjective element' in any study should recognise the involvement in the social world of men and women who are the creators of that social world. The reality of the social world is consequently to be reduced to a recognition of the role of human consciousness, which itself is deemed to be expressive of the form of thoughts and beliefs and of the language and the discourse of a people, as well as of the

significance of the social signs and signals that form the basis of the social interactions of that people (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Burr, 1998; Harding, 2004).

The Social Constructivism also may not reflect a full picture of the present study, and for the opposite reasons of those presented by the Positivist. Social Constructivism regards 'reality' as synonymous with the values and beliefs of social actors, but in doing so it fails to recognise existing social realities which condition social actors and their subjective perceptions (Jackson and Carter, 2007; Benton and Craib, 2001). If this tendency towards subjectivism is developed to such an extent, then there is a clear danger of it losing contact with any kind of inter-subjective objectivity. This may lead to the risk of being reduced to gathering little more than different opinions and divergent views, a position that ultimately leads to scepticism, for example in respect of which WLB policies might be recommended (Benton and Craib, 2001). If our language is central to 'constructing the social world', how can we 'test' that language against any objective reality (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b)? It is simply not possible to establish a criterion of 'truth' if we have nothing against which to test our language and the claims that are made in and through that language.

4.2.3 The Critical Realism Paradigm

Critical Realism reflects both sides of the above debate: it accepts that 'reality' is in part 'subjective' and in part 'objective' (Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 1978). In order to do so, the Critical Realist paradigm utilises a stratified, or deep, ontology (Sayer, 2004). This 'deep ontology' comprises three distinct layers: the *empirical*, which is what is observable by human beings; the *actuality* of what exists, such as social institutions and collective organisations, including the state; and a conception of the *real* that goes beyond facts, perceptions, and experiences, and which seeks to explicate underlying social mechanisms that are independent of the observer but which serve to condition the social life, and therefore the subjective perceptions, of social actors (Sayer, 2004; Bhaskar, 2010). According to this approach, a researcher should be able to grasp the *subjective* as well as the *objective* truth of the WLB practices within the cultural and organisational context under study. In other words, the researcher will consider the social mechanisms of the culture, the norms of the society,

prevailing economic ideas, and other existing aspects of 'reality' behind the events observed (Bhaskar, 2010; Sayer, 2002). These should then be combined with the experience of social actors, which is to say, those whose actions are being studied, in order to generate as comprehensive a set of recommendations for WLB practices as possible.

To this end, the epistemology of Critical Realism is both subjective as well as objective, and provides a means by which the researcher is able to take account of an existing and given external reality, a reality which may of itself be neither perfect nor complete, as well as accommodating the dimension of a personal and interpersonal 'subjective' reality (Crotty, 1998; Sobh and Perry, 2006). In its most basic form, this may be taken to mean that knowledge of the social world is to be produced by a study of such factors as governmental rules and regulations, as well as prevailing social and cultural norms, the labour union, the organisational structure *and* by an assessment of the impact which these 'objective' factors have on individuals in terms of their perceptions, decisions, actions, and social roles, as they themselves interpret these (Reed, 2005; Reed, 2001).

It must be recognised that such social mechanisms are never entirely fixed and determined in and of themselves but are constantly open to stress and flux, and therefore to change over time (Bhaskar, 2010; Bhaskar, 1978). This is a process of change which in part is dependent on the human social actors themselves and in part is a consequence of factors outside of the control either of individuals or collective organisations (Archer, 2003). In effect we are seeking the *still point* in a world of change, a *still point* which, over time, will itself be subject to modification as the social reality it reflects undergoes change (Archer, 1995; Willmott, 2005). For example, in order to understand the barrier to taking up the WLB practices by employees, Critical Realism will likely oblige the researcher to move progressively from surface appearances – from a *flat* ontic reality – to a deeper *stratified* ontic level in order to determine the social mechanisms involved in any social practices and the objective mechanisms which in turn are embedded in either social or cultural conditions, or most likely, in both (Bhaskar, 2010; Archer, 2003). Under each 'layer', there is usually to be

found one or more sub-levels, so that under the general category of 'society', the individual participates in family life, ethnic group friendships and exchanges, religious organisations, and so on. All of these factors, taken together, reflect the 'whole reality' of the barriers to using the take up of WLB practices by employees (Archer, 2003; Fleetwood, 2005).

The Critical Realist does not take his findings to be necessarily fixed and objective over time. Change is accommodated within the methodology by means of a feed-back loop between ideas and real social practice and outcomes (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2008; Fleetwood, 2005). Critical Realism holds that the reality of the social world is always relative and that any 'scientific theorising', while presenting the best means of deriving knowledge of both subjective and objective factors, is inherently fallible. While most methodologies seek to determine the outcomes of the policies they advocate, Critical Realism goes further by recognising that any change to the social practices dominant within a society will inevitably feed through into other aspects of the life of a society, aspects which are not usually considered to be direct consequences stemming from those practices (Boyd, 2010; Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004).

Critical Realism argues that, despite any epistemological relativism, it is always possible to combine its findings with a judgmental rationality which asserts that a science is not an arbitrary practice but rather the product of rationally determinable criteria by means of which it is possible to judge whether certain theories are better than others (Niiniluoto, 1991; Boyd, 2010). This *feed-back loop*, and its potential to facilitate an internal modification of the study, will be represented in a triangulation of the finding from the perspective of different groups, as well as by reference to existing theory and the objective factors supporting any particular viewpoint. In effect, Critical Realism is a self-booting approach to the study of social and economic conditions, providing the researcher with a tool that permits first the formulation of a *theory* and then the opportunity to *test* this theory against objectively determinable *practical* outcomes. In other words, it attempts the unity of both theory and practice (Niiniluoto, 1991; Boyd, 2010).

We shall therefore turn to consider in the section following the appropriateness of a qualitative method, as opposed to a quantitative methodology, as the best means by which to arrive at a comprehensive understand of the subject of the present study.

4.3 Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology

Accepting the assumptions of Critical Realism necessarily reflects on the methodology and the techniques to be adopted in order to reveal the nature of the phenomena under consideration (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004). A qualitative approach is implied by the methodology of Critical Realism and is used to enable the researcher to explain the underlying causal factors at work on the social situation and by this means to explain the “why” and “how” of the case under consideration. Linked qualitative research entails an open system in which a researcher first observes the realities of the observed social world and then seeks to develop, by means of a self-critical, inductive process, a ‘theory’ that is presumed to be adequate to explain the key elements of the social world under investigation (Bryman and Bell, 2007). In other words, any investigation of the perceptions of either employers or employees in respect of the reasons for adopting WLB practices will entail investigating a potentially open system, one that is unstable, and one that requires a complete account of the circumstances and the dynamic of the system to be understood prior to proceeding any further (Sechrest and Sidani, 1995).

Quantitative methodologies tend to treat the subject of any study as a *closed system*, one that is determined by the boundaries covered by existing theory and which in turn leads to a belief in the possibility of precisely specifying the dependent, independent, and controlled variables to be included in the study (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Such a method, however, is inherently incapable of drawing a full picture of the dynamic at work in any situation, because it is unable to account for a) why claimed relationships exist, and b) why individuals are prone to treat essentially subjective factors, such as culture, religion, and social conventions, as conditioning factors in respect of their behaviour (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b). The approach of Critical Realism assumes an ‘open’ system of multiple, interacting observations which are

required in order to tell the 'full story', to be understood in terms of an exhaustive account of the various factors and influences at work (Boselie et al., 2005). Only when we are satisfied that our theoretical understanding of a given social situation is as adequate as it can be is it possible to transfer from a qualitative analysis to a quantitative study of what is involved in that social situation, for only then will all the relevant conditions and criteria have been explicated more fully (Sechrest and Sidani, 1995).

Utilising a qualitative approach, and its *inductive* method of reasoning and drawing conclusions, it is hoped that the researcher will be able to investigate a topic that has so far not been investigated, namely, the implementation of WLB practices in a Palestinian context (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2009). Such an investigation should enable a researcher to formulate the necessary set of qualitative presuppositions based upon which the research will be possible. Without first determining the nature of the practices suited to a new region it is self-evidently impossible to proceed to any quantitative examination of the benefits, or disadvantages, deriving from the adoption of these practices. This methodological approach is therefore first qualitative and only subsequently quantitative, otherwise we are merely engaged in a process of imposing a set of pre-conceived assumptions onto a new context without any prior investigation as to the suitability of those assumptions (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b).

However, quantitative approaches tend to generate difficulties because they are constructed by reference to a purely deductive method (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b). Such 'deductive' approach utilises a theoretical framework that is to be reduced to the observation on the part of the researcher of a particular set of relationships between variables. Since most, if not all, of the existing theories have been developed in a Western contexts – and this is particularly so in the area of WLB – any attempt to conduct research about the best set of WLB practices to be adopted in a Palestinian context based upon pre-existing theories is likely to be irrelevant and, perhaps positively misleading (Aykan et al., 2000; Hogarth et al., 2001).

To sum up, the thesis will draw upon a qualitative approach on the basis of an *ontological* and *epistemological* paradigm that will take account of the existent objective ‘facts’ of the world, how those ‘facts’ are to be understood, as well as embraced within this reality: the subjective realm of those individual perceptions which influence human behaviour within the context studied. Critical Realism, therefore, has implications from the very start of the research project in respect of the formulation of the research question itself and objectives that the research will seek to attain.

4.4 The Research Question and Objectives

Given the lack of any prior grounding for a study of WLB practices in an Arab context, it is necessary to find some means of combining the existing reality in Palestine with the experiences of researcher himself, and to do so in order to formulate the research question (Sobh and Perry, 2006). The researcher is a practitioner experienced in the field of HRM in large organisations, as well as having an academic experience in teaching in the same field in Palestinian Universities. This experience has been drawn upon to assist in determining the area of research to be undertaken and in order to formulate the nature of the research questions. To begin with it is necessary to investigate what literature exists on the subject; this process, however, as we have seen, is only of limited value given the fact that WLB practices have hitherto not been examined in any Arab country.

Any survey of the literature on WLB conducted in a Western context has specified research objectives, and the literature on the subject focuses on the nature of those WLB practices which already exist, the reasons for adopting such practices, the role and the behaviour of line managers and the access and take up of WLB practices by employees in Western settings. There are many factors which can influence the determination of the most appropriate content for WLB practices in any given context, most noted among these being cultural differences (Aycan et al., 2000; Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Hogarth et al., 2001; Aycan and Eskin, 2005). Such differences present a need to determine the initial objectives of any study, particularly so in regards to the content and structure of WLB practices most appropriate to Palestine. The second objective

must focus on the reasons for adopting WLB practices. The third objective focuses on the behaviour of line managers and their impact on take up of WLB practices by employees. The fourth objective focuses on the use of WLB practices by employees. These objectives have led the researcher to formulate the final two objectives, namely, 5) that of focusing on comparing the finding of the perspective of the employer and employees; and also 6) developing theoretical bases of the content of WLB practices, and reasons for the adoption of, and effectiveness of WLB practices in Palestine.

4.4.1 The Research Question:

The primary research question is this: what is the nature of the WLB policies and practices in the Palestinian context in comparison with those in contrasted cultural settings, and to what extent are the available WLB policies of value, and effective in the Palestinian organisations?

4.4.2 The Research Objectives:

1. To explore the nature of prevailing WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
2. To explore the reasons for adopting WLB practices in Palestinian organisations.
3. To explore the role and the behaviour of line managers and their impact on the use of WLB practices in Palestine's Telecommunication industry in particular.
4. To explore the factors influencing the Palestinian employees in accessing and using WLB practices.
5. To explore and compare the findings from the perspectives of the managers and employees
6. To explore whether existing theoretical models of WLB can be applied to the Palestinian case, or whether new theoretical models should be developed.

Consideration must now turn to the research strategy and methods which are appropriate for the investigation of these objectives by means of a qualitative research method.

4.5 Research Design

The reasons for choosing a qualitative method for this study have been outlined above. What is now required is a discussion of the design of such a qualitative research method in terms of the research strategy to be adopted and the best means for sampling and data collection, and analysis and interpretation of the results obtained. The initial focus will be on a 'case study' approach and on how this is able to provide us with an appropriate strategy to investigate the relevant phenomena.

4.5.1 The Case Study Approach

A 'case study' strategy is probably the most appropriate for attempting to understand the phenomena of WLB practices. A 'case study' is defined as '*a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within a single setting.*' (Eisenhardt, 1989: 534). Such a 'case study' will concentrate on the features unique to a particular case, whether those features relate to individuals, organisations, or whatever is entailed by some given project. The preference for utilising such a strategy has been noted by Eisenhardt:

A case study approach is appropriate where there are new research areas, or in those research areas for which the existing theory seems inadequate. This type of work is highly complementary to incremental theory building for normal science research. This is useful in the early stages of a research topic, or when a fresh perspective is required; whilst the latter [a quantitative investigation] is useful in the later stages of knowledge (Eisenhardt, 1989: 549).

But a 'case study' approach does not necessarily imply the examination of a single case alone, for multiple cases may be involved within any single study (Yin, 1994; Yin, 2011). The criteria of utilising one or more cases depends on the richness of the case to be covered and the phenomena of the study; Yin (1994) argues that a researcher can utilise the strategy of a single case, but only if this case has a high degree of richness and is the most appropriate in respect of the phenomena to be investigated. Usually the collection of 'in-depth' data requires a series of case studies, and does so simply on the grounds that any single case may fail to cover all the aspects required in order to ensure that

the research objectives are attained as completely as possible (Eisenhardt, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In consequence of this advice a multi-case approach has been adopted in the present research, which approach is embraced within a unitary study. This has entailed the collecting of data from two companies in the telecommunication sector in Palestine. These companies had a high potentiality in respect of richness of data that was likely to be derived, and were appropriate to the phenomena to be investigated in that they together represented one of the first major introductions into Palestine of modern industrialised methods.

This multiple case approach is compatible with the philosophical presumptions underlying Critical Realism insofar as the formulation of recommendations for 'best-fit' practices is concerned in an area (i.e. WLB in Palestine) that has not previously been investigated (Archer, 2003). By utilising the case study method, the researcher is able to collect data from the context in which social phenomena occurs before proceeding to generate an understanding of the phenomena, to eventually arrive at an 'objective' presentation of the structural mechanisms at work (Archer, 2003). In addition it enables the researcher to explore different findings or contrasted perceptions, deriving from employers as well as employees, and to explore possible reasons underlying any such differences. This particular part of the process of generating a series of 'best-fit' recommendations is difficult to achieve unless the strategy adopted permits the researcher to concentrate on the research subject both in breadth and in depth (Yin, 1994; Yin, 2011).

The 'case study' approach has not been widely adopted in studies of WLB practices. There are limited studies (Bond et al., 2002; Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Hyman and Summers, 2007) which have utilised a case study method in order to investigate the reasons for adopting WLB in organisation. By utilising a case study method in the present research, it is hoped to be able to derive additional insights into its uses, and its applicability in understanding the adoption and use of WLB practices in the context of Palestine (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b); and in so doing enhance the applicability of this technique to the study of new contexts.

Case study could include quantitative, qualitative or a multiple mix of methods. Any 'case study' ought to concentrate on as 'deep' an investigation of the case at hand as possible, and in understanding different levels of phenomena it is possible to utilise a qualitative approach such as semi-structured, or unstructured, interviews, and observations (Yin, 1994; Yin, 2011). Thus, the research in the present study adopts an interview method as likely to provide the most appropriate insights.

4.6 The Interview Approach

The researcher in this section outlines why an interview is an appropriate research method. An interview method lends itself both to both a qualitative and a quantitative approach (Maxwell, 2004; Bryman and Bell, 2007). The main difference between these two is that in the quantitative approach a highly structured interview is used, comprising a precise and pre-formulated set of questions. In contrast the unstructured, or semi-structured interview offers a more appropriate method within the qualitative, case study approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Maxwell, 2004). The purpose of Critical Realism, the researcher's preferred approach, is to present inner or subjective values, the attitudes, the beliefs, the emotions, and the perceptions of social actors – be they employees or employers – in regards to an as yet fluid and open set of potential WLB 'best practices'. An unstructured or semi-structured interview technique should allow the researcher flexibility, and enables him to adapt or modify his enquiry in the light of responses given. This freedom to follow up particular responses that are deemed to be of interest, and to investigate the underlying motives and social mechanisms at work, is central to the process, for unlike his Positivist counterpart, the Critical Realist must begin his enquiry with few preconceived ideas (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Archer, 2003).

The qualitative interview method has among various goals, that of enabling the researcher to become close enough to his subject to be able to discover and interpret the participant's own viewpoint, and to reveal to a certain extent the 'social reality' of a given subject (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). The first duty of the Critical Realist is to become familiar with his subject and to formulate his ideas

about that subject in light of a consideration of a variety of relevant factors. Such a familiarity is often possible only by means of face-to-face interviews and interactions. Interviews by telephone, or across the internet, or by means of questionnaires are remote instruments of interrogation and may not serve to facilitate an understanding of a subject; they merely facilitate the collection of raw data in a preconfigured format (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Creswell, 2009). In contrast, the face-to-face interview technique enables the researcher to come closer to his or her social subject as well as facilitating an interpretation of the subject from different perspectives, in this case those of the employers and the employees. It is difficult for other approaches, such as a purely observational method, to gain an insight into the subtle differences of meaning which can render an uncritical multi-perspective approach either redundant or misleading (Marshall and Rossman, 2010; Marshall, 1996), 1996). One of the purposes of this study is to enable employees to reveal information about actual or perceived barriers in using WLB practices and the behaviour of line managers in their departments. In the service of this end, Focus Groups, for example, could serve to reveal the perception of individuals in relation to their working conditions. But individual perceptions may undergo change in a group structure, and tend towards the presentation of a consensus viewpoint which accords with how the conversation has developed within the group, as opposed to revealing the real concerns of individual members (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Bryman, 2008). This is a tendency that it is desirable to avoid.

Forty nine interviews were conducted by the researcher, 16 interviews with managers and 33 interviews with employees, across both case studies. This number was sufficient to collect the data essential for the present study and emerged as sufficient to attain 'saturation point' (no new information emerging) in respect of the topic under investigation (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The number of interviews was certainly sufficient to provide a strong basis for subsequent analysis. A semi-structured interview technique can produce a greater degree of consistency in respect of questions, with a corresponding improvement in the ability to compare the cases involved in the studies (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, this technique assisted in the investigation of the theoretical framework as a whole by raising questions with respondents within a specified time limit. In

unstructured interviews the discussion may only cover particular questions while others germane to the enquiry are ignored. Given the limited time available to the researcher for the purpose of conducting the interviews with managers, this semi-structured interviewing technique permitted the interviewer to raise questions that were open-ended and had a clear purpose, and yet were flexible enough to allow respondents to raise other relevant matters spontaneously in reply to questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Agar and MacDonald, 1995).

There are, however, certain drawbacks to the interview technique, drawbacks which may not be markedly applicable to the current research. An important problem is the danger that respondents may misunderstand the meaning of words or expressions in interview questions. Without some background in respect of the culture and the language of the region to be studied, the interviewer may himself interpret words and meanings incorrectly (Bryman, 2008; Agar and MacDonald, 1995). To this end a skilful interview technique and a prior familiarity with the context of the study are invaluable aids to ensure that misreading and misunderstandings are eliminated if possible by the researcher at the time of interview – this was the goal of the present researcher, who originates from the culture under investigation and has previously worked in the field of HRM for more than years in Arab organisations. Other concerns are about utilising an interview approach, particularly in respect of reliability and hidden bias (Healy and Perry, 2000) on the part of the researcher: these will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

4.7 The Research Instrument

The research questions derive in part from an investigation of relevant literature relating to the phenomena, such as the investigation by Hogarth et al. (2000) and other studies (Wang et al., 2008; Osterman, 1995b; Dex and Smith, 2002; Lewis and Campbell, 2008) of the nature of WLB practices and the reasons that influence organisation to adopt these practices. These studies, as well as others (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003), indicate that the components of ‘women’ and ‘employees with dependents’ in the workforce, can influence the employer’s responsiveness in adopting WLB practices. Other practices may be a consequence of governmental regulation

and so forth. Chapter three, the literature review outlined for example, the nature and structure of WLB practices in a Western context, which might be used as tentative guidance to explore the content and structure of WLB practices of the present study.

The questions were arranged into categories under four topics headings. The first topic is addressed by two questions asked of managers: what were the WLB policies in the organisation, and how were they implemented in the workplace. The second topic is addressed by a set of two questions and was concerned to elicit from the employer and employees the perceived *reasons* behind the implementation of those practices already in place. It is of particular interest to know if there are any policies which have a particularly strong rationale for their adoptions. The third topic includes questions asked of employees about the behaviour of line managers and their role in the take-up of WLB practices by employees. The fourth topic was addressed by two questions asked of employees in respect of a) their views about those WLB practices already adopted in the workplace; and b) their views about usage of these WLB practices (see Appendix for the main Interview Questions).

The interview questions were ranked in a logical order in accordance with the desired research objectives. This ranking, however, is not achieved at the sacrifice of flexibility with respect either to changing the questions themselves or their place within the interview schedule. To a certain extent it was necessary for the researcher to change the nature or tenor of the questions asked, their content and their order, in accordance with the responses given. At the end of the interview respondents were given the opportunities to ask questions or to add any information which they believed important for the general topic of WLB practices.

Before the interview process was undertaken, a pilot study was undertaken to aid in the evaluation of potential interview questions.

4.8 An Exploratory Study

The exploratory, pilot study was carried out by means of four interviews with employers and employees within one of the telecommunication company. These prior interviews did have an effect on the evaluation of the interview questions. The interview questions were seen to be too wide and insufficiently specific, a failing which tended to be time-consuming and to result in respondents failing to highlight many practices that already exist within their organisation. The researcher therefore decided to list the perspective of WLB practices in a table that was distributed to all participants before the interview in order to enable them to indicate whether or not certain WLB practices existed in their organisation (see Appendix for this Letter). The answers given were then used as a means to focus attention on the availability and uses of those practices already current within the organisation.

Questions that enquired about the reasons for adopting WLB practices were modified. This was because some confusion arose in the answers from participants who were unsure as to whether the questions related to the impact of WLB rather than the reasons why the organisation had adopted these practices in the first place. In order to avoid confusion, the researcher chose to highlight some examples of the potential drivers in each case.

4.9 The Sampling of the Study

Qualitative research obliges us to explore and understand the phenomena in detail, which must be one of the primary concerns of any researcher. Doing so will entail the amassing of a rich pool of significant information from a study of appropriate cases, along with an awareness of the background and views of the people who comprise the subjects of that study (Bryman, 2008; Marshall and Rossman, 2010). The qualitative researcher is, in consequence, usually obliged to apply a non-random sampling procedure such as a theoretical, or purposive study as opposed to a random sampling which may provide insufficient information about important but rare or unique cases: consequently data that will be of little use if we inadvertently include cases that are irrelevant for a more focussed study (Marshall, 1996; Coyne, 1997). Denzin and Lincoln state that:

Qualitative researchers employ purposive sampling methods. They seek out groups, settings and individuals where... the processes being studied are those most likely to occur (2005: 370).

The qualitative researchers may not at the outset have a specific vision in regard to the concepts or variables or even the theme to be studied. These may emerge and be developed in the process of the study itself. Given this, theoretical sampling may appear to be more appropriate in qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser and Strauss, 2009). Theoretical sampling chooses a sampling basis upon which to found a study with the corresponding requirement to investigate emerging concepts in respect of the phenomena themselves. It entails a constant process of sampling and not one limited to particular participants or to fixed cases (Sandelowski, 1995; Mason, 2002). Silverman (2005) states that theoretical and purposive samplings are often treated as synonyms. The reason for this synonymy is the fact both forms of sampling require a constant re-sampling as soon as it becomes apparent that an idea is worthy of further investigation. He adds that both approaches are strongly suited to Critical Realism because the philosophy behind Critical Realism encourages the researcher to generative research strategies and methods and to do so gradually and continuously, in order to grasp the key motivating factors involved (Silverman, 2013; Silverman, 2005).

In light of these prerequisites for a purposive sampling technique, the researcher constructed certain initial criteria in order to choose the cases to be studied (Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2013; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Chapter 3 highlighted the availabilities of WLB practices in respect of a number of factors: 1) the size of the organisation; 2) the type of organisation; 3) a percentage of women in the workforces, and workers with dependent children or parents; 4) the level of competition in the market place (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Wood et al., 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002). There are also unique factors which are related to the social and religious profile of Palestine; these factors are listed below:

- 1- **The Size and the Type of Organisation:** Generally, WLB practices are implemented in large organisations because here economies of scale are

most likely to apply, for example, in the provision of workplace nurseries. The costs of such provision are more readily absorbed by large as opposed to small ones (Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003).

- 2- **Service Organisation as opposed to Manufacturing:** The service sectors as opposed to manufacturing are more likely to make use of such practices because the primary competitive advantage of these organisations is to be found in the quality of their workforce rather than in the quality of a material product. Such organisations derive significant extra benefit from the implementation of WLB practices that are intended to enhance and increase the competitive advantage of their workforce (Dex and Smith, 2002; De Menezes et al., 2009).
- 3- **Women in the Workforce:** Several previous studies have found that the adoption of WLB practices applies responds in particular to the presence of women in the workforce (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Lewis and Campbell, 2008). Hogarth et al. (2000) found that the adoption of flexi-time, job sharing, term time working, the ability to change from full-time to part-time work, the provision of childcare, and homework practice in European organisations related primarily to the proportion of women in a workforce.
- 4- **Competition in the Labour Market:** Wood et al. (2003) argue that the provision of WLB practices depends on the particular characteristics of the marketplace in terms of the availability of labour, the abilities and skills accessible in that market, and the level of competition from other organisations for the labour available. For organisations working in the same sector, such as telecommunications, competition is a factor obliging organisations to adopt WLB practices in order to attract the limited number of workers available with the requisite skills.
- 5- **The Social and Religious factors in Palestine:** In Chapter 2, it was emphasized that it is more acceptable for women to work in well-known organisations that have a good reputation, as opposed to smaller or family businesses. In smaller businesses, women may experience sexual harassment and feel unsafe at work.
- 6- **The Location of the Organisation:** In addition to the above criteria, the location of the case study to Palestine was necessary because there was

at that time no restriction for the researcher in travelling to or from the country and no difficulties were presented in staying there for the time required to undertake an in depth assessment.

According to the above criteria, and given the researcher's own personal experience of and familiarity with the Arab world, its people and their language, and its organisations, the researcher was able to establish a sample that matched each of the above criteria. These were found to be present in telecommunication organisations that are large, and that have a relatively a high proportion of women in the workforce. These organisations work to international standards and operate in a highly competitive market. They are well known organisations, have a good reputation, and women feel safe at work, and accepted by society in occupying such work roles (Shehadeh, 2000; Sidani, 2005; Jamal, 2001). There are now three telecommunication organisations established in Palestine. There are also other Israeli organisations that have a part share of the market. After personal contact with the Human Resource managers of these organisations, the researcher was able to gain access to each of the organisations chosen for the study. It was decided to utilise two of the three organisations as constituting a relatively equal match in terms of size, turnover, and the number of employees on staff. The third organisation is smaller and more recent in its inception and was excluded as likely to present a bias in the study in respect of those WLB practices it had yet to implement.

4.9.1 The Research Participants

The criteria for selecting the participants in the study were the information that they were likely to be able to provide, combined with certain objective characteristics. Women were felt to be key participants in the interviews in respect of WLB practices. This is because women tend to encounter work/family conflict to a greater extent than men and so might be more inclined to make use of available WLB practices (Hyman and Summers, 2007; De Menezes et al., 2009). This is also true of those workers with dependants, whether men or women, and it was deemed desirable to consider them as the principal participants in the interviews. Those to be interviewed were recommended, at the researcher's request, by different departments in the

organisations and had a range of differing characteristics in terms of position and gender, factors which were considered in order to make the sample as wide as possible. This way of proceeding fits well with the assumptions of Critical Realism, for individuals are unique social actors each with his or her own individuality (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006b). However, the researcher also employed a convenience sampling technique in order to substitute for those respondents who were either unable or unwilling to participate in the study (Patton, 2002; Bryman, 2008). In addition, some of those taking part in the interviews had recently accessed WLB practices, and some of the workforce interviewed intended leaving the organisation for a variety of reasons, among which was a refusal on the part of their line manager to grant access to certain requested WLB practices. Including various groups of workers in the interview process hopefully ensured that a wide range of views regarding WLB practices in the organisations.

The interviews were conducted by means of raising a variety of topics and questions, as well as presenting new ideas in order to test the responses of the interviewees, and to explore how each constructed his or her own social world. On occasion it was necessary for the researcher to prompt the interviewees in respect of the reasons for certain opinions, and in order more fully determine why they held certain views in respect of WLB practices, and what consequence they expected to follow from these practices (cf Sabh and Prey, 2006).

With respect of the above criteria, the researcher visited the two Telecommunication companies to determine whom of those initially identified, would be interested in participating in the study. The participants who agreed were given general information about the background of the topic and the purpose of the study. The researcher determined the times and dates for each interview, and this is represented in the following subsections.

4.9.1.1 The MobileCom Case Study

The researcher conducted interviews in the first case study of MobileCom, with 8 managers, as well as 17 employees in the head offices of the company in

Palestine. Face-to-face interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with a range of managers and employees in different departments, as the following table of the characteristics of participants indicates.

Characteristics of Manager Respondents				
Participant Code	Job role	Length of Services (Years)	Gender	No of Depend
Manager1	HR Manager	10	Female	2
Manager2	IT Manager	6	Male	4
Manager3	Vice-President Manager	12	Male	4
Manager4	Marketing Manager	7	Male	3
Manager 5	Administrative Manager	8	Male	3
Manager6	Procurement Manager	10	Male	4
Manager7	Show-Room Manager	6	Female	2
Manager8	Sale and operation Manager	9	Male	4
Characteristics of Employee Respondents				
Participant Code	Job role	Length of Services (Years)	Gender	No of Dependents
Employee1	Business Sales	6	Male	4
Employee2	Sale Administrator	3	Male	1
Employee3	Accounts Sale Administrator	4	Female	1
Employee4	Marketing Administrative	5	Female	3
Employee5	Accounts Sale Administrative	3	Female	1
Employee6	Customer Care	5	Female	3
Employee7	Customer Care	6	Female	3
Employee8	Administrator	4	Male	4
Employee9	Procurement Administrator	6	Male	2
Employee10	Information Technology	4	Female	1
Employee11	HR Administrator	3	Female	2
Employee12	Call Centre Staff	4	Male	4
Employee13	Maintenance Officer	5	Male	4
Employee14	IT Officer	2	Male	2
Employee15	Marketing Administrative	3	Male	3
Employee16	Information Technology	2	Female	1
Employee17	Administration officer	5	Female	5

Table 3: Sample of the Study in the MobileCom

Women represent about 52% of the total sample. Female and male staff interviewed were distributed across different positions and departments within the organisation. Their length of service is varied, and the age range was

between 28 to 45 years. The interviewees were all married and had from 1 to 6 dependent children.

4.9.1.2 The TeleCom Case Study

Finishing the interviews in the first case study assisted the researcher in collecting data in the second case study, since certain salient themes had already been identified, which could be more fully explored in the second case study. The researcher then conducted interviews in the second case study, of TeleCom with 8 managers as well as 16 employees in the head offices of the TeleCom in Palestine. Face-to-face interviews lasted for approximately 45-60 minutes, and were conducted with a range of managers and employees in different departments, as the following table of the characteristics of participants indicates.

Characteristics of Manager Respondents				
Participant Code	Job role	Length of service (Years)	Gender	No. Dep.
Manager 1	Head of Technical Department	12	Male	5
Manager 2	Head of Commercial Department	10	Male	4
Manager 3	The Administrative Directorate	13	Male	6
Manager 4	Vice-President of HR Directorate	8	Female	3
Manager 5	Vice-President of the Supply Chain	12	Male	5
Manager 6	Vice-CEO	16	Male	5
Manager 7	Sales Directorate	11	Male	4
Manager 8	The Show Room Manager	6	Female	2
Characteristics of Employee Respondents				
Participant Code	Job role	Length of Services (Years)	Gender	No. Dep.
Employee 1	Technical Engineer	4	Female	2
Employee 2	Marketing	2	Female	1
Employee 3	Administrative Secretary	10	Female	2
Employee 4	Technical Engineer	5	Female	4
Employee 5	Service Support Engineer	9	Male	6
Employee 6	Accountant	4	Male	4
Employee 7	Sales Administrator	2	Female	2
Employee 8	Administration Support	7	Female	4
Employee 9	Purchase Administrator	14	Male	7
Employee 10	HR Administrator	10	Female	7
Employee 11	Customer Support	7	Male	5
Employee 12	Customer Support	8	Male	5
Employee 13	IT Support	3	Male	2
Employee 14	Sales Administration	4	Female	2
Employee 15	Engineering support	5	Female	3
Employee 16	Accountant	3	Female	2

Table 4: Sample of the Study in the TeleCom

Women workforce is represented 55% of the total sample. Female and male staff were distributed across different positions and departments in the organisation. The length of service varied among participants, and the age range was between 28 to 55 years; all of the interviewee were married, and had a number of dependents ranging between one and seven children.

4.9.2 The Saturation Stage

The 'saturation point' occurs when the researcher feels that fresh data is either redundant, or is likely to be more of a hindrance than an advantage (Maxwell, 2004; Bryman and Bell, 2007). The interview process conducted in the two case studies with 49 participants seemed to cover as fully as possible, so far as the researcher was concerned, the aims and objectives of the research. This was because the themes and ideas that emerged from the participants began to be repeated, and no additional roles (e.g. by rank or experience in the organisation, gender or type of work performed) needed to be accessed. Thus, the researcher argues that the 'saturation point' had been fully satisfied because the data analysis results were becoming repetitious.

Because this study is qualitative in nature rather than quantitative the researcher was not limited to a single set of participants. The researcher could add new cases if new lines of enquiry (in the 'grounded theory' model) appeared to be necessary (Glaser and Strauss, 2009). As previously indicated, the researcher did not assume at the outset that the final number of the case studies would be only two. The researcher may add new case studies and new participants as desired if this would be likely to lead to the generation of further useful data. This fits well with the qualitative approach in respect of generating theory during the course of the research, for it is incumbent upon a researcher to collect, encode, and analyse his data before deciding what, if any, other data to collect and where best to derive that data in order to facilitate the development of his theory. This process entails a continual sampling and one that is not limited merely to a particular set participants or to a predetermined set of events or cases (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Maxwell, 2012).

4.10 Data Analysis

After obtaining the formal consent of the research participants, the interviews were recorded by means of an audio tape. These tapes were then transcribed into a clear format, intended to be as reader-friendly as possible (in the language of interviewees, the Arabic language, rather than translating the whole documents into English language). Translation of all of the transcripts into English was not undertaken: the idiomatic meaning, nuances and the sense of

many sentences and paragraphs would have been lost; there are many Arabic expressions which cannot be translated in a way that reflects their 'real' meaning. Given this, the researcher translated to Arabic language only the quotes presented in data analysis chapters (Silverman, 2005; Silverman, 2011). These interview transcripts, which are in Word format, have been subjected to an exhaustive process of qualitative analysis, one which is not limited to a single systematic method as would be the case with the quantitative approach (Sandiford and Seymour, 2007). There are different approaches that can be utilised, such as 'grounded theory', a 'thematic analysis', and other methods which rely on a 'retroductive' principle of Critical Realism rather than the traditional inductive principle for applying the coding process (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Dey, 2003).

This is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data based on organising the data into coded segments and themes which are intended to reduce the totality of data to a meaningful format capable of subsequent analysis in respect of its most salient elements (King et al., 2004). Codes refer to a label that is attached to a section of text as a guide to its relation to a theme within the data set; the theme itself is a statement of meaning that runs through all, or most, of the pertinent data, and frequently arises from the way in which the various categories relate to each other. In short, it is akin to the idea of a paragraph in textbook (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). This retroductive Critical Realism approach can be utilised at an early stage in the interview process, as was done by the present researcher who sought to make abstractions from the data and to understand its meaning and significance during the process of its collection. This method assisted the researcher in seeing possible new themes or ideas which were emerging and which required consideration in the interviews to follow (King et al., 2004). This proved to be the case with several WLB practices, particularly those related to social and financial WLB practices. It is also identified the factors of Internationalisation and Networking; these factors emerged in the interview process and have been considered as a 'code' for further interviews; they had not been part of the original theoretical framework of the study.

According to the paradigm of Critical Realism the codes for data analysis derive mainly from a top-down coding taken from suggestions found in the existing literature rather than from a bottom-up system of coding from data itself; in this respect the researcher considered the existing theoretical framework of the study in terms, for example the role of government and Labour union (Codes), and examined them by interviewees (Urghart, 2001). The researcher has, however, derived certain significant themes from the interviews themselves and has added to the theoretical framework of the study (abductive approach) these derived concepts, in respect of social WLB practices, the political and Islamic belief of individual, the social origins of individual, and other categories. These concepts (codes) had not been underlined before, and did not exist in the initial theoretical framework of the current study; they were developed as the interview process unfolded. The researcher has produced a list of codes that represent themes occurring throughout the data collection process. For example, the theme concerned with the reasons for adopting WLB practices is represented by the following codes: government rules and regulations, labour unions, women in the workforce, workers with dependents, the position of women in society, and the existence of competitors in the market.

After an intensive reading, and rereading of data transcripts, the researcher applied the above codes to the transcription of the interviews. This assisted in the arrangement and segmenting of the data according to their similarities or sub-groupings. King (2004) argues that this process is important for structuring data, beginning with the highest level of coding and steps progressively downwards from the most generic codes to sub-codes, and then sub-sub-codes, finally arriving at a hierarchical structuring of the data set by the means of both primary and derivative encodings. The highest code levels were: the nature of the WLB, the reasons for adopting the WLB, the role and behaviour of line managers, and use and benefit of WLB practice by employees. At this stage the 'copy and paste' functions of a word processor were employed to organise and manage the data according to the coding process desired (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Crabtree and Miller, 1999).

King (2004) further argues that this process is a template analysis, in which the researcher utilises a list of codes applicable to the whole data which can then be loaded into a software package such as N-Vivo. Once this is done it is possible to use the tabular display facilities of this software to manage the data and thus indicate patterns and particular relationship that arise. Given that the data transcript is translated from Arabic Language to English Language: when software is employed, the computer is not capable of understanding or integrating the relationships generated in one language into a second language. The researcher alone is able to undertake this function (Crabtree and Miller, 1999). Given this, the researcher utilised the manual process of data analysis of transcripts. This is in respect of deriving from the preceding coding process, certain segments of data that had a number of codes applied to them. This degree of coding was essential for data analysis and a fuller interpretation of the results. For example, the researcher encountered a link between reduced 'leave arrangement', as one code, with 'women with dependents' as the second code. This process is essential because most participants communicated with certain words, but did not raise any causal or theoretical considerations in respect of them. It is the function of the researcher to link these words within an over-arching theoretical understanding or intuition (King et al., 2004).

4.11 Evaluating the Research

The validity of the research is a concept founded on the assumption that what was intended to be done, has actually been done, and can be depended upon as yielding accurate finding, is of great importance. The procedures used to arrive at a theory must also be demonstrated to be reliable: this is to be done by reference to the possibility that such procedures can be repeated and, if repeated, will produce the same results as the original analysis (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 2009). The criteria usually utilised by the Positivist Paradigm, or a quantitative approach, are ill-suited to evaluating the present qualitative research with its Critical Realist approach. This is because the criteria for quantitative approaches is designed primarily to evaluate objective criteria, as opposed to subjective data and the conclusions derived by the researcher from his or her insights into and understanding of the observation of the research situation (Creswell, 2009).

It is possible to arrive at a determination of the consistency of the research by applying two principles of evaluation as discussed by Guba and Lincoln (1994). They argue that in qualitative research the concept of 'trustworthiness' should be employed. 'Trustworthiness' involves focusing on an audit approach whereby the researcher keeps all records generated at all stages of the research process and make them accessible as required. These records will cover the formulation of the study, the selection of participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, data analysis, and the coding process, and so on (Golafshani, 2003). In addition, in order to enhance reliability it is necessary to apply a process of auditing whereby at the end of the data analysis the researcher will produce the code book used in the data analysis. This book will be given to other researchers to enable them to apply the same codes in respect of the data transcript, to observe and test the level of consistency between these codes and the observations of the external researcher. It is hoped that by making this code book available, subsequent research may be undertaken in which the qualitative categories of understanding derived from the present research may be validated independently. In addition it is intended that this code book should make it possible for a future quantitative researcher to be able to validate, explore, and perhaps enhance the conclusions reached by means of the application of these codes. One of the dilemmas encountered by the present researcher, however, applies to the transcript data itself, as this is in Arabic. It will therefore be necessary for anyone who wishes to test the validity of the findings discussed below to have some degree of familiarity with Arabic in order to understand the process of translation and coding.

In terms of validity, Critical Realism argues that: *"The social world is an 'open system' ... unlike in a laboratory, where the conditions for the effective triggering of causal mechanisms can be created, and no such opportunity exists in the social world."*(Pawson and Tilley, 1997: 150). The critical realist researcher tries to uncover knowledge of the world by naming and by describing broad, generative mechanisms that operate in the world. In other words, validity is always a 'contingent validity' whereby the researcher develops a 'family of answers' covering several contingent contexts which reflect the views of

different participants, albeit imperfectly, as will be indicated in the next chapter (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

It is always possible to combine a set of findings with a judgemental rationality which asserts that any science is not an arbitrary practice but rather the product of rationally determinable criteria by means of which to judge whether certain theories are better than others (Niiniluoto, 1991; Boyd, 2010). In other words, the researcher intends to triangulate the finding from different groups and to relate these to existing theory and to 'objective' factors supportive of a particular viewpoint. This will be done by reference to a system of representative quotations in support of explanations which occur throughout the text. These explanations will, in turn, be linked to the respondent who provided them in order to ensure their possible reliability as well as reflecting the context of the study.

4.12 Ethical Questions Arising from the Research

The question of ethics primarily concerns what is good or bad for the research participants. It is related primarily to the question: is the researcher, or are the participants, exposed to any potential harm or undesirable consequences? In addition it is a concern with how much information about the process should be disclosed (Piper and Simons, 2005). In some cases, the researcher may seriously harm the participants, either physically or emotionally, through loss of employment, creating stress, or by generating negative feelings within the organisation, all potentially resulting from a release of personnel information or information provided in confidence (Creswell, 2009).

The present researcher has sought to avoid such problems by informing all participants about the conditions under which interviews would take place, particularly with respect to the voluntary nature of their participation in such interviews, and has indicated a desire to conduct the interviews free from any fear or anxiety on the part of the participant. The researcher sent a formal letter to all participants explaining their right to refuse to answer any question which they feel might impact on their privacy or lead in any way to harmful

consequences (see Appendix for this letter) (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Silverman, 2011).

There are also other ethical questions about the confidentiality of data in respect of access by unauthorised parties, or as a result of theft and used of the information to bring harm to those individuals and organisations participating in the present case study (Ramos, 1989). The researcher employed a strategy of secure data storage, as well as refraining from naming any of the individuals involved. The anonymity of the participants was also protected by means of a certain amount of 'creative coding' which had the intention of making the data source useless as a means for identification of either the participants themselves or the organisations involved (Silverman, 2011; Munhall, 2001).

Other researchers have indicated the importance of giving feedback, or the whole interview transcript, to respondents; this is the case in the present study. Both of the organisations used as cases had asked for a transcript of the data, but this has not been possible until the analysis has been concluded. Because some of the data includes the name or title of the respondents, the researcher has agreed to send a copy of this transcript but only after redacting the text in order that the identity of respondents could be determined either directly or indirectly. The reports to be submitted once the current thesis has been completed, were intended only to enable participant organisations to evaluate matters of concern for that organisation, particularly with respect to the feelings and the views of their employees in respect of the condition prevailing within that organisation.

4.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher has offered a justification of the methodology applied in this research. It has been argued that Critical Realism is a viable philosophical tool for understanding WLB policies and practices in Palestine. Preference has been given to a qualitative approach in which the researcher was able to accommodate both objective phenomena as well as the subjective views of respondents in respect of the social mechanisms underlying WLB practices. The researcher has presented the research question and objectives

which were followed by the arguments that justifying the choice of a multi-case strategy involving two Telecommunication companies in Palestine have been presented. A purposive sampling procedure was utilised to choose those companies based upon criteria such as the presence of women in the workforce which is essential to investigate WLB phenomena. This multi-case approach has assisted in deriving a deeper understanding and a greater clarification of the topic, an understanding and a clarification.

The researcher then used a semi-structured interview in preference to any other approach in order to gather information. The interview approach enabled the views of respondents to be observed in respect of the factors which might have the greatest degree of influence on their understanding of and access to WLB policy and practice. The researcher then presented the data analysis technique that would be used to transcribe data transcripts for the 49 interviews. The transcript was conducted in the language of the participants, which is Arabic. At the conclusions of the chapter, the study presents a method for evaluating the research process, particularly in respect of how this qualitative method is intending to enhance the credibility and validity of the research. The researcher does not seek to universalise the research process and its finding, but merely asserts that this remains potentially the case given the nature of the research strategy employed. In the same way, the ethical dilemmas involved in employing a qualitative approach were discussed and strategies to deal with these were presented.

C H A P T E R F I V E

T H E M O B I L E C O M C O M P A N Y C A S E S T U D Y

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers findings on the MobileCom organisation. The Chapter is structured into four sections based on the four objectives of this thesis which are to explore: 1) the nature of Work Life Balance (WLB) policies in the organisation; 2) the reasons for adopting WLB practices within the organisation; 3) the influence of line managers on the accessibility and usage of WLB practices by employees; and 4) to what extent the employees embraced or used the WLB practices.

5.2 Background on the MobileCom

MobileCom is one of the largest telecommunication service companies in Palestine, and belongs to the Palestine Telecommunications Group "PALTEL". MobileCom focuses on mobile cellular services (Ali, 2007). It obtained its license from the Palestinian National Authority in 1996 and started its cellular services in 1999 to become the first Palestinian legal cellular operator working inside the Palestinian territories. MobileCom's start-up capital was JD25 million. Its capital has increased over time through numerous investors from both local and international bodies (Sahem, 2011). The Company's vision statement focuses on maintaining a leadership position in the Palestinian cellular market. It provides the most robust area coverage in the region and intends to continuously improve by incorporating into its network system all the latest technological developments (PALTEL, 2014; Wamda, 2010). MobileCom sustains strong performance in the market place despite the growing competition in the telecommunications sector in Palestine. This includes a number of Israeli and other international companies (AlShaikh Ali, 2007; Sahem; 2011). Wireless services subscribers with MobileCom, account for around 80% of total subscribers in Palestine. This figure increased by 7.40% in 2011 reaching a total of 2,420,000 subscribers (Ali, 2007; Hijazeh, 2011).

MobileCom's working model is based on a modern management system, which is adopted from, and used, in Sweden and other developed countries (PALTEL, 2011; Wamda, 2010). Its accounting system, payroll, and marketing adopt up-to-date procedures from overseas (e.g. Oracle accounting system). Many of the workers attend professional development courses abroad in Arab and Western

countries. MobileCom recruits talented university graduates who also have international work experience. Many of their managers have work experience in international organisations such as NASA, and Erikson. Their workforce has also a high language proficiency in English. Therefore, they are able to satisfy the demands of the management and the technology systems of the organisation, which are based on the English language (PALTEL, 2005).

MobileCom uses an online recruitment system to reach a wide pool of potential employees, including employees from abroad. According to MobileCom's strategic objectives, the HR director is involved in determining training and professional development needs for newly hired employees, and for appraisal systems. MobileCom has an email service and Intranet system to receive feedback about any concerns the employees might have. If necessary, it even brings employees into brainstorming sessions to find a solution to the voiced concerns (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007). The company offers a well-developed benefit system for their workforce. Specifically, MobileCom states that it offers their workers, including part-time employees, a health care system, disability/invalidity coverage, maternity/paternity leave, a competitive salary, financial bonuses, annual dividends, end of service pay, and a childcare centre (PALTEL, 2005). Despite the harsh economic circumstances in Palestine, MobileCom aims to offer a high level of job security. This is because MobileCom is a fast growing company and is continuously seeking to attract and retain high quality talent. Currently, there are around 600–800 employees working in all the branches in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Female employees constitute about 21% of the total workforce (PALTEL, 2005).

MobileCom has 21 showrooms and sales points across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. There are two main offices for the organisation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. These offices contain the company's top management and the entire organisation's primary workforce. The Human Resource Division is structured into various departments; for example, recruitment and employee relations, training and development, and performance and appraisal. Each section is considered a function in its own right, but each section also carries responsibility for the organisation's HR system as a whole. There is a senior

management unit for the HR department, located in the West Bank with a deputy HR manager in the Gaza Strip. Other departments, such as Marketing, Information Technology, and Administration follow the same design structure as the HR division. Each department has its own senior manager, who is located in the West Bank and the deputy manager in the Gaza Strip. Across most of these departments, a number of interviews were conducted. The characteristics and the number of interviewees of the sample have been outlined earlier in the Research Methodology (see section 4.9.1.1).

5.3 The WLB Policies of the MobileCom

Based on the standpoint of the MobileCom managers, this section is concerned with the formally adopted WLB policies, as opposed to the actual practices in the organisation.

The analysed data indicates a variety of WLB policies which focus on issues such as part-time work, flexitime, annual leave, sick leave, maternity, paternity leave, and childcare (similar to those described in other settings - Torrington et al., 2005; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Gomes, 2013). The data indicate that additional WLB policies also exist in MobileCom. These include breaks for prayer time, and personal visiting times during working hours, hardship financial support, and subsidy for studies. These policies, as discussed later, are part of WLB policies because they are perceived as helping individuals achieve a balance between their working time, and their social, religious, financial individual and family responsibilities. Therefore, MobileCom offers many WLB policies, categorised under: 1) flexible WLB Policies, 2) leave WLB policies, and 3) childcare WLB policy (similar to those described by Glass and Finley, 2002; Fleetwood, 2007). The new policies which emerged in the present case study are classified within two new groups, namely: 4) financial WLB policies; and 5) social and religious WLB policies. As discussed in due course, many of the financial and the social and religious WLB policies have not been described before by previous researchers in the context of WLB policies.

5.3.1 Flexible WLB Policies of the MobileCom

The research identifies four policies, which are consistent with the meaning of flexible policies in terms of granting individuals the ability to set their own working hours as per their personal needs (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Fleetwood, 2007). The policies listed in the table below are part-time, flexitime, teleworking and reduction of work hours for women. The hourly reduction for women is a new policy that was not, in my literature search cited in the Western WLB literature. Because of some cultural factors, discussed later, women during the winter season are entitled to have a one hour reduction every day from working hours. The following table lists common policies identified in the research literature, and whether these policies were available in the Palestinian case study.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study One
1.	Annual Hours	Flexible	No
2.	Job Sharing	Flexible	No
3.	Term-time working	Flexible	No
4.	Compressed working	Flexible	No
5.	Teleworking	Flexible	Yes
6.	Flexitime working	Flexible	Yes
7.	Part-time working	Flexible	Yes
8.	One-hour reduction for women	Flexible	Yes

Table 5: Flexible WLB policies of the MobileCom

At MobileCom the part-time and flexitime working policies can be accessed by all members of the workforce. In line with the other HR management policies at MobileCom, the part-time and flexitime policies are adopted under a specific schedule and regulation. For example, individuals have the right to work one hour on a flexible basis, i.e. they can start work at 7:30am or 8:30 am.

The entire workforce, according to the specific work regulations, can use flexible policies... Individuals needs to fill out a form and HR managers need to sign it ...this is the normal procedure of the flexible policies. (Managers 5 and 8).

With regard to the part-time policy, any individual in the organisation has two options: a) working three days a week instead of the normal five days a week,

and b) reducing working hours to five instead of eight a day. The flexible options follow a clear set of rules and regulations established by the HR department and the line managers who could have a discretionary role as discussed later (See section 5.5). The teleworking policy exists for the workforce, but it is applied only in the IT and computer design department in the MobileCom. This is due to the fact that the use of the system is dependent upon the work culture related to the Internet.

Teleworking is limited to those working at the IT departments. It is not possible for accountants or a sales person to have this policy, because they need a direct contact with the customers... the E-commerce system is not popular in Palestine because of non-existence of E-banking or credit card culture. (Manager 2).

E-commerce culture systems are still very limited in Palestine compared to Western contexts (Dex and Smith, 2002; Forth et al., 1997). Individuals still depend on physical transactions when buying mobile services from MobileCom. Hence, teleworking is only used in a few departments in the organisation. The departments using teleworking policies are generally not involved in buying or selling. One of the reasons for the emergence of WLB policies in the organisation is probably due to changes in the socio-cultural system of the society, specifically the movement towards a somewhat more individualistic life style, which is associated directly or indirectly, with having a greater number of women in the workplace.

Flexible policies and many WLB policies appeared recently in the organisation as a result of changes in society. We live today a modern life style which means living away from our own extended family; weakened traditional kinship style, children need care, increase of women in the workforce and so on...these changes lead to a need for new WLB policies and this is specially due to the emergence of women in the workforce. (Managers 6 and 7).

It is clear to the observer that individuals in Palestine are moving towards a more independent and individualistic life style system: for example the decreased birth rate and the associated social changes such as a decrease in extended family support, and recent changes of women's roles in the workplace (cf Metcalfe, 2007; Whiteoak et al., 2006). These changes boost the interest of MobileCom employees in part-time, childcare and other WLB policies. These changes have mainly affected WLB policies pertaining to women rather than men. The trend towards women-friendly WLB policies at MobileCom becomes evident through

the existence of the one-hour reduction for female staff during the winter term. This policy emerged as a result of some Islamic beliefs rooted deeply in society:

Women have limited time especially during the winter-term, because the day is quite short leaving limited time to look after their family...there is also a negative perception about women who work late in the evening, because women who are going out during the night time are not respected and should have a partner "*Mahram*". (Manager 8).

At MobileCom women are entitled to leave at 3:00pm instead of 4:00pm every day during the winter season. In addition, within the Palestinian gender context women have more responsibilities than men; individuals also interpret Islam as assuming that women are presumed to be weak and gentle; they are not supposed to go outside alone at night. It is something not acceptable by society; women are supposed to be chaperoned through *Mahram* which refers to all those males whom a woman cannot marry at any time in her life such as a father, brother or uncle (Sidani, 2005).

Unlike in many Western organisations (Bond et al., 2002; Glass, and Finley, 2002), the MobileCom applies only a few flexible WLB policies in the workplace. The option of using flexible work schedules has been offered to employees only recently, while such work options have been established for several various decades in a number of Western countries (Eikhof et al., 2007; Den Dulk et al., 2012). One of the reasons behind the slow adoption of flexible policies is that the need of new WLB policies emerged only recently at MobileCom due to recent change in Palestinian society. Additionally, managers mentioned that most of the workforce, especially men, are less interested in flexible policies due to many reasons such as level of income: this will be examined later (see section 5.6.1). The slow growth of the Palestinian economy also negatively affects the engagement of the organisation in flexible WLB policies.

There is sort of level of development in the market, but not strong enough to demand more working hours and increase the attendance of the workforce. It could happen in the future, with an increase in political stability and number of investors as well as competition within the market. (Manager 3).

One of the reasons for the advancement of WLB policies in many Western countries is the necessity to comply with the development in the market. This

resulted in a system of long working hours in order to satisfy customer needs (De Menezes et al; 2009; Dex and Smith, 2002). This is generally not the case in Palestine, since the development of the market is still in its early stage. With further growth in the market and work intensification, additional flexible WLB policies could emerge to satisfy the needs of individuals and the organisation. The narrow involvement of the organisation in flexible WLB policies is also related to the level of benefit and drawbacks of their adaptation in the workplace.

It is not a forthright procedure to have WLB policies as a direct goal. We are working step by step or gradually...there are managerial and cost issues related to adoption of each of them. (Manager 7).

MobileCom is reluctant to engage vigorously in introducing in new policies. Such a finding is consistent with many studies in Western contexts like the UK (Dex and Scheib, 2001). And indeed, MobileCom seems to be less eager to adopt WLB policies than many companies in Western contexts, due to the fact that organisations in Palestine operate in a high risk political and economic situation. There is however very limited government support for family and child benefits in Palestine, which is generally not the case in a Western context (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Den Dulk et al., 2012).

Flexible policies are therefore new matters in the MobileCom and are not as well-developed as in many Western contexts. MobileCom's flexible policies include one new type of policy for women, which has not been found in Western contexts to date. These policies focus specifically on the women workforce and are called "*Women-policies rather than WLB policies.*" (Manager 1).

5.3.2 The Leave WLB Policies of the MobileCom

The research shows that the leave arrangement policies, which focus on reducing attendance at work to meet an individual's personal life needs, are consistent with those known in a Western context (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Glass and Finley, 2002). Table (6) shows an overview of the policies that are known in a Western context and whether they are also evident in the context of MobileCom. The first six policies table (6) are part of the Palestinian labour legislations, as discussed the Palestinian Labour Law before (See section 2.6).

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study One
1.	Paid annual Vacation	Leave	Yes
2.	Paid Breast Feeding Leave	Leave	Yes
3.	Paid Maternity Leave	Leave	Yes
4.	Paid Sick Leave	Leave	Yes
5.	Unpaid Parental Leave for Women	Leave	Yes
6.	Leave for the Bereavement	Leave	Yes
7.	Elder Care Leave	Leave	No
8.	Child Sick Leave	Leave	No
9.	Leave for the Honeymoon	Leave	Yes
10.	Paid Emergency Leave	Leave	Yes
11.	Paternity Leave for Men	Leave	Yes
12.	Paid Study Leave	Leave	Yes

Table 6: Leave WLB Policies of the MobileCom

The leave policies, which are not part of the labour law, are applied and managed at MobileCom according to precise formal rules and regulations. They are established in the organisation's code of practice as well as being included in the employee contracts. Workers have a right to 28 days annual holiday, which increases according to the number of working years. They are also offered 15-days of sick leave per year, which can be extended depending on the medical situation. Women have 70 days maternity leave, which is quite short in contrast to the maternity leave in many Western contexts like UK (Straub, 2007; Theivenon, 2011). In addition, due to cultural factors, care for the elderly is not available at MobileCom.

The leave to care for the elderly is not part of the organisational responsibility. If someone has a strong need to look after their father or mother they can take an emergency or annual leave...from the religious perspective the relatives, friends, neighbours and extended family could look after them. (Manager 3).

The Islamic culture expects that individuals will indeed look after their father, mother, elderly people, and even neighbours. This reflects Islamic principles that the elderly should be cared for on a daily basis rather than just on specific days. Hence, organisations do not see such care as a special event, which requires a specific policy (Quran: Sorat Lokman). In Western countries, professional or paid care for the elderly is generally available. Especially Scandinavian nations have established policies and more recently the UK has

developed policies to care for the elderly (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010; Ray et al., 2009).

The female workers at MobileCom are offered an extensive breast-feeding leave of one hour every day for two years, which is not typical in many Western contexts (cf Straub, 2007; Theïvenon, 2011). This is a reflection of the Islamic principle, which encourages women to feed the baby for two years: “And his weaning is in two years” (*Sorat Lokman*). Moreover, MobileCom also offers an extensive bereavement leave policy as well as honeymoon, and emergency leave policies: the company offers three days, which could be extended to 10 days for bereavement; 10 days, extended to 15 days for a honeymoon; and 10 hours or more for emergency leave. These policies are necessary to satisfy the social and cultural values.

Individuals could expend these leaves [honeymoon, bereavement and emergency] by unpaid leave to satisfy their social and family needs which are embedded in their culture... Individuals are supposed to welcome people who visit them over the first two weeks. (Manager 1).

The people are used to supporting each other in sadness and happiness. Even though society is moving more towards a modern individualist system, special occasions (e.g. honeymoon, death in the family) are still important since they do not occur frequently. The bereavement and emergency policies exist in a Western context (Theïvenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009), but are not as emphasized as they are at MobileCom. The bereavement policy is written in MobileCom’s general organisational policy and also reflects the government regulations (Labour Law, 2005). Culture specific features of the Palestinian society with regard to leave policies (e.g. parental leave) still cater to the needs of female employees rather than for both genders.

Women in the organisation have one year unpaid leave [parental leave] when they give birth. This is stipulated in the rules of government and MobileCom, but it has been introduced rather recently, just about 10 years...It is only for women. (Manager 7).

There are still clear gender differences in WLB benefits between men and women. Women in contrast to men are still supposed to look after their new born baby for at least one year, and this might be related to the Islamic principle which states that “*His mother gave birth to him in weakness and hardship upon*

weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years”(Sorat Lokman). Hence, offering parental leave for both genders becomes, in cultural terms, less crucial. This is not typically the case in many Western nations in which parental leave is designed to benefit both genders (but is commonly accessed only by women) (Theivenon, 2011). In the present study, findings indicate that there is a paternity leave available for men to help their wives during birth time.

About 3 years ago, our organisation gave the workforce [male] the opportunity to take 3 days parental leave...These practices were introduced as an initiative by management in recognition of the high degree of family responsibility carried by men in this particular time... Such practices were regarded silly in the past. (Managers 1 and 4).

This policy was not applied in the past due to the limited engagement of men in women issues, and this suggests some changes with regard to gender roles in Palestine. However, this change should not be considered radical, as the number of days offered is still very limited, and a few managers consider this policy as a gift: *“This is our gift for employee for the new baby”* (Manage, 5).

To sum up, MobileCom offers many leave WLB policies to the entire workforce. In comparison with many Western countries, some leave policies at MobileCom are more extensive, while other policies are still lacking due to specific social, gender, cultural, and religious issues in Palestine.

5.3.3 Financial WLB Policies of the MobileCom

WLB policies vary between nations, and the emergence of new policies is potentially due to prevailing welfare needs of individuals in a specific culture at a particular stage of development (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Hogarth et al., 2001; Aycan, 2000). The findings of the present research suggest that the policies outlined in table (7) are an important development of MobileCom’s WLB policies because they allow individuals to have access to some important welfare benefits, which consequently have some positive effects on the balance between their personal and working lives. The following table lists the financial support WLB policies available for MobileCom policies.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study One
1.	Contributing to the cost of studies	Financial	Yes
2.	Contribution to cost of building and refurbishing destroyed homes from war	Financial	Yes
3.	Free landline and mobile service	Financial	Yes
4.	Health Insurance for the whole family	Financial	Yes
5.	Sport and Beach Clubs for Family	Financial	Yes
6.	One month Family Holiday	Financial	Yes

Table 7: Financial WLB Policies of the MobileCom

At MobileCom, the financial policies are part a “*MobileCom Family Welfare Program*” (Manager 3), which is applied to all employees.

Family welfare programme consist of many benefits for workers to enhance their quality of their life such as, health insurance and family trips... because we are living in an unstable political area and many wars occurred on Gaza, we also offer financial incentives for individuals who lost their house or were injured. (Manager 3).

Many financial policies are offered for individuals such as £1,500 support for family trips abroad, subsidies for studies for low income families, and financial support in individual crises. Individuals are also covered by the organisation if they lose their house as a result of war or any political conflict in Palestine. MobileCom covers the living costs of the dependents of the employee who died, or the costs of refurbishing houses. Some of these financial WLB policies have been cited in the previous literature, but usually they are linked to “fringe benefits” available only to specific staff members, rather than to all individuals of the organisation (Bach and Sisson, 2000; Baral and Bhargava, 2011). Therefore, these specific financial policies covering all staff members constitute a new contribution to current WLB policies. Along with other factors, such as the impact of labour unions the origin of the financial package is derived from the contextual features of the political and welfare system of Palestinian society.

Individuals pay extensive amounts to receive a good education, healthcare...They also need some savings to get their sons married and to build future for them ...because of the weak benefit offered by the governmental system and high individual financial obligations, the financial policies are very important for offering to assist individuals

during crises which could occur at any time, especially in Palestine. (Manager 1).

Palestine has a lack of public provisions to support the health and education of its citizens. Individuals are required to pay extensive amounts to receive good healthcare services. There are no loans or other financial support systems offered by the government to the people of Palestine (Devi, 2004; Rihan, 2001). Thus, MobileCom has come under some pressure to offer certain financial policies to their employees. This is not typically the case within many Western countries, such as Sweden and the UK in which many of these financial benefits are already available in the welfare system (Poelmans et al., 2003a; Lapierre et al., 2008). Some managers also observed, for example:

The main challenges in Palestine are the bad political and economic situation, which in turn, reduce an individual's stability and increase an individual's concern with regard to the future of his/her family. (Manager 7).

People in Palestine live in an unstable economic situation and in a harsh political climate. The insecure Palestinian environment creates high uncertainty with regard to the future of an individual's life. This consequently increases an individual's stress levels, and pressure to acquire financial support to secure his/her future.

In summary, apart from study leave, and health insurance, most of the remaining financial policies described in the present study are new to the WLB literature. They have not been described before, because they are not a key issue for studies that have focussed on a Western context.

5.3.4 The Childcare WLB Policy at MobileCom

Like many organisations in Western countries (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Fleetwood, 2007), MobileCom offers its employees the option to make use of the childcare centre (up to the school age of 6 years), and MobileCom covers at least 50% of the costs. Along with other factors, such as existence of a female workforce, the introduction of the childcare policy at MobileCom is the result of a decrease of the extended family support system in the Palestinian.

All workers with dependants have the right to register their children in the organisation's childcare centre. The childcare centre emerged about 5 years ago to comply with changes in a society where women

now rely mostly upon a private childcare as the existence of extended family support is limited. (Manager 5).

Around 30% of the employees make use of this policy at MobileCom (Managers 3 and 6), and the availability of childcare centres is increasing in the marketplace. These developments suggest that changes are beginning to occur in Palestinian culture. Specifically, society is moving towards an individualistic life style, which is associated with a decline in extended family culture; hence the increasing demand for childcare centres (this similar to trends in other developing countries - Whiteoak et al., 2006; Spector, 2004). Due to the fact that there is limited governmental support for childcare centres in Palestine compared to Western countries (IdilAybars, 2007; Theivenon, 2011) the childcare policy becomes the responsibility of individuals and organisations. A number of managers gave additional support for an increasing movement towards an individualist life style system in Palestine:

A decent business right now is to run a childcare service. You will get a lot of money and the market demand is high ... Traditional style families who used to live together and help each other have decreased. (Manager 2 and 6).

The evolution of childcare policy is mainly to due to changes in the family support system, which is the consequence of a more individualistic life style. This finding is in line with several studies in the developing world, and in Arab contexts (Wang et al., 2008; Kargwell, 2008).

5.3.5 The Social and Religious WLB Policies of the MobileCom

The range of WLB policies may change over time and include any policies, which satisfy the prevailing social and cultural factors of society (Hogarth et al., 2001; Chandra, 2012; Aycan, 2000; Aycan and Mehmet, 2005). It is possible to argue that the policies listed in table (8) are part of WLB policies of MobileCom because, as discussed now, they help individuals to balance their working hours with their social and the religious needs.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study One
1.	Personal Phone Call	Social	YES
2.	Personal Visitor at Work	Social	YES
3.	Prayer-time Breaks	Religious	YES
4.	Reduced Work Hours in Ramadan	Religious	YES
5.	Hajj Vacation	Religious	YES
6.	Ummrah Vacation	Religious	YES

Table 8: Social and Religious WLB Policies of the MobileCom

Any individual in the organisation has 30 to 40 minutes every day for prayers and a room is available for this purpose. At MobileCom employees have the possibility of two months of paid holidays for religious reasons: one month for Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) and another month for Ummrah. Individuals will usually go on these pilgrimages once or twice in their lifetime. Individuals can also request an additional Hajj holiday, but as unpaid leave. There is 3-hour-reduction from the working day during the month of Ramadan, and a holiday during the last three days of the fasting month of Ramadan. These Islamic practices are obligatory for all Muslim individuals in Palestine (Kamal-ud-Din, 2010; Kamali, 2003); hence the majority of organisations embrace this practice.

Hajj, break for prayer and many other religious arrangements are catered for in our organisation... It is unacceptable for any business, including international ones, not to offer those policies to individuals...they are obligatory as part of Islam. (Manager 3 and 5).

Religious practice, policies and rituals are essential for all Muslims (Nydell, 2012; Kamali, 2003), and are accommodated in most Palestinian businesses, whether local or international. Muslim people are accustomed to pray five times every day, of which two prayers could occur during working hours. Even if the government regulations did not include religious policies explicitly in the labour law (Labour Law, 2002), the organisation is under pressure to offer a time for prayer and for Hajj. At MobileCom every religious policy is formalised in a written contract. Using these Islamic policies is also related to the Islamic principle of *Baraka*.

We are happy to offer religious policies because it is something interrelated with our Islamic principles and increases the *Baraka* for the business of the organisation and ourselves. (Manager 6).

Baraka refers to a faith-based belief of Muslim people that Almighty God may increase the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals and organisations in which prayers take place, and when the ethical principles of Islam are observed. This is mainly accomplished by helping and supporting people in engaging in their Islamic practices. Consequently, the *Baraka* will be returned to the individual or organisation: “*God will compensate you because you compensate and support other people*” (Sonnah Books).

The MobileCom also permitted individuals to have a personal visitor like father, mother, or friends in the workplace for 15 to 20 minutes. The inclusion of such social policies at MobileCom are rooted in Palestinian culture, in which there is limited separation between working and personal life.

What can I do if my father or friend needs a favour and they call me or drop by my workplace ... or one of them visits me at my workplace because he is nearby ... it is shameful to say that I am too busy today and I will see you next time. (Manager 4).

Palestine like many Arab countries, is characterised by its polychronic culture rather than the European monochronic culture (Hofstede, 2001; Aycan, 2000), because individuals generally still live in a relaxed manner even within the workplace, and roles, customs and norms from the wider society also often prevail in the workplace. Hence, individuals in Palestine feel less pressure to achieve high efficiency at work, which consequently makes the integration between their personal and working lives more natural. The fact that Palestine is a rather polychronic culture has an impact on social policies and how employees deal with events such as visitors. However, the misuse of these policies needs to be controlled within organisations.

Everybody could make or receive a personal call or receive visitors at the workplace, but not too frequently and they should be used according to the rules of the organisation...20 minutes are enough for visitors...we demand some respect for the workplace. (Manager 8).

Establishing clearer regulations on the use of social WLB policies in the workplace is important however, because individuals could miss work schedules

in having, for example, long chats over coffee with friends at the workplace. Because these practices are linked with the culture of Palestinian individuals, MobileCom does not prohibit them; rather they set specific rules to avoid misuse which could affect the performance of the individual and the organisation.

In summary, there are new WLB policies focused upon satisfying the social and religious needs of the employees. These policies have not been discussed in the existing research literature, which is mainly based on a Western context.

5.3.6 The MobileCom Family WLB Culture

MobileCom offers other WLB policies for their employees to satisfy the needs of their families. For example, while formal procedures offer one-year study leave, employees are generally given two years study leave if these are required. Individuals can also request a longer period of unpaid leave to care for their parents. In other words, individuals at MobileCom have access to such policy extensions in exceptional circumstances. These exceptions are due to humanitarian principles embraced by the organisation, which is part of the *'MobileCom Family'* culture.

Whether WLB practices or other organisational policies, they all work according to the principles of the *'MobileCom Family culture'*...each of us is a member of this family. We, as management, look after employees, and vice versa. If someone needs support, the organisation will not hesitate to do so, and this even entails if they need money and loans. (Manager 5).

The *'MobileCom Family'* refers to both organisation and the employees which are treated as one family. The organisation is somewhat like a father that has a responsibility to look after its individuals, while employees reciprocally have an obligation to respect their 'father organisation', principles embedded in both culture and religion. In cases where there is a need to reduce the working hours due to personal reasons, the organisation will offer such assistance. The presence of the Islamic religion plays a significant role in enriching the relationship between individuals and the need to help each other (Nydell, 2012; Kamali, 2003). Thus, the family oriented culture and presence of paternalist organisations is reflected in the WLB policies at MobileCom.

5.3.7 Summary of the Content of WLB policies in the MobileCom

MobileCom offers part-time work options, flexitime, and teleworking under specific circumstances. In contrast to flexible WLB policies in many Western countries (Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Clutterbuck, 2003), MobileCom offers a one-hour reduction for women every day during the winter term. This is a policy which has not been observed in any previous literature. Furthermore, compared to WLB policies in many European countries (Lewis and Lewis, 1996; Hogarth et al., 2001), the WLB policies at MobileCom were also found to incorporate certain apparently unique financial and social WLB policies. These policies have not been cited before in any available study. However, changes in social, religious and cultural factors are influencing a reduction in the degree of care for the elderly and leave for childhood illness. Leave policies such as emergency leave, bereavement and honeymoon policies are more developed than in many Western countries in order to satisfy the social needs of the individual. Like organizations in Western countries (Glass and Finley, 2002), a childcare policy is available at MobileCom, which suggests that individuals now often have more independent lives away from their family. This however, did not decrease individual obligations toward close family members, because that is related strongly to Islamic principles.

5.4 The Reasons for Adopting WLB Policies in the MobileCom

This section examines some of the reasons behind the adoption of WLB policies at MobileCom. The presented findings are based on the responses of managers and employees. Both groups tended, overall, to cite six key factors: 1) Social and cultural factors; 2) Regulations of the government; 3) Needs of women employees; 4) Competitors' policies and the need to recruit skilled personnel; 5) International networking; and 6) The existence of the labour union. The identification of social and cultural factors, and of international networking are new findings, and are discussed further on in this chapter. These six factors and their impact on the adoption of WLB policies are listed in the table 9 below.

Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices	Flexible WLB Practices		Leave WLB Practices		Childcare and Financial WLB		Social/Religious WLB Practices	
	Empl.	Manag	Empl.	Manag	Empl	Manag	Manag	Empl.
Social and religious	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	Strong
Rule of Government	-	-	Strong	Strong	-	-	-	-
Existence of Labour Unions	-	-	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
International Networking	-	-	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	-	-
Competition/ Labour Supply	Strong	Weak	-	-	Strong	Weak	-	-
Female Workforce	Strong	Strong	-	-	Strong	Strong	-	-

Table 9: Main Premises for Adopting WLB Policies at MobileCom

This is only an illustrative table, and does not aim to emphasize a positivist relationship, or a quantitative approach. Evaluating and understanding interviewee's perception does, in the critical realist design however, help to identify the potentially direct relationship between reasons for adoption of policies, and their actual implementation. But the table is not built on any statistical analysis, and certainly does not mean for example, that the influence of social and religious factors are uniquely dominant influences on the nature of leave policies. 'Strong' in the above table means that the majority of managers and employees agreed on the postulated relationship. 'Weak' means, that a small number of managers or employees agreed on the relationship. The '-' is used when there were no participants mentioning the relationship.

5.4.1 The Social and Religious Factors of Palestine

The polychromatic nature (see section 5.3.5) of Palestinian society is reflected by the fact that most individuals do not clearly separate their work and social life. MobileCom has adjusted its policies in order to accommodate these cultural factors.

It is normal in Palestine for people, whether they are managers or employees, to have visitors or to speak on the phone during working hours... It is accepted and common in most of organisations. (Manager 5 and Employee 2).

The data also suggests that the adoption of social policies may also derive from a 'benchmark' whereby organisations follow what has already been established in the marketplace (Francis and Holloway, 2007). Otherwise, as Manager 5 stated, "The organisation becomes outside of the accepted mode of acting"; and this might not be acceptable for the employees. The social policies at MobileCom are a potential challenge for management, and while management does not prohibit the acts derived from these cultural norms, it establishes some regulations on how they should be applied.

You can manage and control the intrusion of private life into the workplace, but it is difficult to avoid because it is common in the entire society. People have little respect for working time and are used to integrate their personal life into their working life. (Manager 8).

This highlights the unique cultural system in Palestine in which people frequently place their private life and family above the demands of their work. This is the norm within this cultural context and might not be in accordance with behaviour in a Western context (cf Lu et al., 2010; Spector et al., 2004). Even if the religious policies conflict with the requirements of working time, such as ritual washing (*wudu*) and praying two times for around 40 minutes, the organisation has no choice but to grant such entitlements (Kamali, 2003).

We are a Muslim society...Prayer and Hajj for example, is compulsory policies for all Muslims and they are obliged to follow these policies in order to fulfil their religious duties... They are very common in most of the organisation and it would be a shame to prevent someone to have them, and if you do so, you become *Kafer*. (Employee 4, and Manager 6).

International organisations with an interest in Palestinian enterprises feel obliged to apply certain Islamic WLB policies in order to accommodate traditional aspects of the society in which they operate. Otherwise, you are an "unbeliever of God" which is unacceptable in Islamic society. A number of applicants observed also: "*The existences of religious policies are related to the reputation of the business and to the concept of Baraka.*" (Manager 6). The organisational reputation in the marketplace is perceived to be strongly related to the adaptation of WLB policies that suit the practice of Islam. The policy is also related to the concept of *Baraka* (see section 2.8).

An Islamic faith, and strong social relationships among people, play a role in defining the WLB at the MobileCom. This is a newly identified factor of why the organisation adopts certain WLB practices in the workplace.

5.4.2 The Rules and the Regulations of the Government

Government regulations are one of the reasons behind the adoption of WLB policies, and this was certainly the case in the leave policies: *“The adoption of most of the leave policies are related to the rules and the regulations of the Palestinian Labour Law.”* (Most of Participants). This is consistent with many studies in Western countries (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Budd and Mumford; 2001). The impact of labour laws certainly informs the structure of HR policies and strategies at MobileCom.

Leave policies are derived from the regulations of the labour law... This can be seen in the employment contracts, HR policies and other documents where such policies are highlighted according to the Palestinian labour law. (Managers 1 and 5).

Working hours, length of holidays, and contractual work are aligned with Palestinian labour law. But with regard to flexible policies, in contrast to many Western nations their existence at MobileCom is not informed by government. The government ministries in Palestine are working on establishing many regulations, auditing systems, inspectors, etc. to enhance the control of businesses in society (MAS, 2011). However, the progress of the labour law is still slow and based on satisfying basic needs compared with many Western countries such as Germany or Sweden (Theivenon, 2011). This is also visible through the development of parental leave in the labour law, which fits the unpaid leave format at MobileCom.

The organisation complies with government rules and regulations and the changes introduced in 2005 ... which give women a right to reserve their place at work for a year after giving birth. (Employee 7, Manager 6).

The unpaid parental leave policy was adopted recently at MobileCom due to changes in the labour law. This policy is the result of social and cultural changes such as an increase of the female workforce, decrease in the influence and use of extended family culture, and pressure of women's non-profit organisations (MAS, 2011). To date the Palestinian labour rule is not applied at

most organisations in Palestine; its application is still in progress in terms of the many organisations in the marketplace.

We are not like other organisations in the market, which do not care about labour laws and employee rights, such as small and family businesses... Our organisation works under the umbrella of Palestinian law and applies what this law stipulates, whether explicitly or implicitly. (Managers 3 and 8).

Mostly in Arab and also in some Western countries, small and family businesses are less open to complying with the regulations of the government. This is because they are less involved with the government and less concerned about breaking the law, or their reputation in the marketplace (El-Said and McDonald, 2001, Wood et al., 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002). Other organisations like MobileCom and, for instance, Bank of Palestine, Masrojj, Coca Cola, UN, and UNIBAL Company (Manager 2, Employee 13), embrace the labour Law. All of these organisations share various characteristics. They have national and international shareholders, while they have relationships with the government and are monitored by the Palestinian government. Therefore, the role of the government is becoming increasingly important for larger organisations. This finding is consistent with many studies in Western countries (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002).

5.4.3 The Presence of Labour Unions in the Organisation

There are two different viewpoints in the current data with regard to the relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and existence of a labour union in the organisation. According to the managers' views, the labour union has many memberships, a strong lobby with other unions in Palestine, and works well at MobileCom and in the Palestinian market. This, however, in their view, has had little impact on the adoption of WLB practices in the organisation.

The Labour Union only manages and runs social activities in the organisation. Obliging the organisation to provide additional benefits to the employees is not their focus... No, I don't think things have been introduced, such as "financial and flexible policies" because of the labour union. I think management has introduced them to assist women and to the benefit of the organisation. (Managers 3 and 5).

The voice of the workers represented by the labour union, in this view, is expressed strongly only with regard to social and family activities at MobileCom. This is in line with many recent Western studies that also emphasize the limited

voice of labour unions in the organisation (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Prowse and Prowse, 2006). As many managers observed, because MobileCom offers most policies which individuals demand, the role of the Labour union within the organisation is limited.

What are the labour unions going to discuss? Every benefit that the employees can think of is available. Employees here are receiving a greater number of benefits than in any other workplace. What is the maximum benefit on the agenda of the labour unions? They are less than what the organisation itself offers. (Manager 8).

Certainly, the initiatives of the management are behind the adoption of many WLB policies in order to assist with organisational strategies and objectives. The labour union has a limited voice in this respect. The employees' views are consistent with those of the managers, especially in respect to the strength of the labour union which has increased at MobileCom and in other large organisations in the financial, educational, and telecommunication sectors. The employees however believe in addition that the labour union plays a vital role in raising interest in and the adoption of many WLB policies.

The Labour Union played a role in improving the workplace environment, and this is mainly reflected in financial WLB policies and study leave, but we cannot say that MobileCom adopted leave or childcare policies because of the pressure of the union. (Employee 1).

Having been established for about six years, the employees insist that the Union has shown a significant pressure in improving financial policies, study leave, and other issues. In the past there were few people that showed initiative with regard to the labour union. Hence, as asserted by many employees: *"It is up to the company whether they take our consideration or not...I agree it was fundamentally the decision of the management rather than our voice."* (Employee 13). In the view of several employees, the role of the labour union at present is now quite strong:

We have now a union body in the organization that has a strong relationship with other unions, and most employees are members and work under its umbrella...the union played a strong role in the negotiation process with management and if they don't agree about some issues, they have the power to suspend work or go on strike... (Member of the labour union, and Employee 8).

The voice of the labour union appears to have developed and contributed to the process of enhancing the benefits for the individual within the organisation, in a

co-operative endeavour in consulting with management. This finding is different from most of the recent studies in Western countries (De Menezes et al., 2009; Prowse and Prowse, 2006). The government and non-profit organisations strengthen the role of the labour union and union membership and its pressure on the market place. The presence of women as members of the labour union committee may also have strengthened the case for women to have leave and childcare policies.

There are nevertheless some dissimilar viewpoints between managers and employees with regard to the role of labour unions and the existence of WLB policies in the MobileCom. Because of some cultural factors - mainly because of a paternalist management style (see section 7.3.4 and 7.3.5), the position of managers and employees showed some contradictions.

5.4.4 Internationalisation and Networking

International collaboration and networking emerged in the research as a reason for adopting WLB practices. Networking is not classified as a strategic alliance (Cullen et al., 2000) because MobileCom has no specific partnership with an international organisation. Participants emphasized that an increased awareness, and adoption, of some leave WLB and childcare policies are associated with co-operation and networking with Erikson and other international companies.

Many of our management team visit these international organisations and vice versa, to learn about the latest developments in different fields...the leave policy that offers men holidays to look after their wives are derived from our experience with companies such as Erikson...It is also from the current CEO who also has work experience at NASA. (Manager 4 and employee 5).

International experiences and collaborations have enabled MobileCom to bring in knowledge from developed countries. This has had an impact upon MobileCom's employment strategy and the policies associated with its implementation. The contextual features and unique international style influence the adoption and changes of WLB policies.

The networking with international organisations requires a high level of standards and proficiency to enable us to interact and communicate with them. Without this capability level in respect to the

management system the organisation would remain outside of this type of collaboration or any network. (Manager 3)

This finding is in line with other studies (Aycan, 2000; Elsmore, 2001) on changes in organisational policy in order to fit in with cultural differences within the various regional offices of an organisation. To have a working model that fits its role as part of an international organisation, it is necessary that MobileCom offers such benefits. This however, does not necessarily mean that the MobileCom is under pressure to follow whatever policies their collaborative partners adopt. The organisation retains its flexibility in this matter in order to adopt policies suitable to its working environment. At the same time, the organisation is obliged to satisfy prevailing standards to a level that is acceptable, to ensure a comfortable, collaborative relationship (Frazee, 1999).

Every year an international organisation such as H-GROUP (British Company), acts as a consultant in the MobileCom (Employee2). It offers advice on how to develop working arrangements in, for example, departments such as HRM. "*H-GROUP was improving the system of promotion, leave policies and childcare services.*" (Employee 14 and Manager 2). Thus, this company plays a role in the development of both its own and international WLB policies. It should be noted that the existence of paternity leave policies for men does exist in some organisations in Palestine, especially the international ones like the UN, UNDP and the Arab Bank (Manager 3). This offers further indication that international factors have an impact on WLB policies. This policy is neither required by Palestinian law (Labour Law, 2002) nor is it in high demand by individuals, as seen later (see section 5.6.1). However, the MobileCom has adopted certain international policies in the workplace, and this might also comply with the needs of their headquarters abroad.

There is clearly a relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and networking and co-operation with foreign organisations. This offers a new view on the reasons for adopting WLB policies, which has not, so far as I am aware, been discussed previously in a Western country's context.

5.4.5 The Role of Competition and Shortage in Labour Supplies

There are various insights from the findings concerning the relationship between competition in the market and the adoption of WLB policies. A few managers observed that the MobileCom needs individuals who have a strong background in telecommunications, and proficiency in English. And because these skills are quite limited in the labour market, the MobileCom might be likely to offer significant benefits to their workforce. Surprisingly, this view is not supported by most of the managers:

The adoption of any policy in our organisation relies on our strategy and employee demands rather than from any pressure deriving from competitors in the market. We are innovative. (Manager 5).

Increasing financial policies, childcare and family holidays have been the organisation's strategy for a long time, but we adopted them recently to compensate workers for their performance during the year. (Manager 3).

The WLB policies at MobileCom arise, ostensibly, from the organisation's own initiatives to improve the working conditions of their employees. External pressure, such as the introduction of WLB policies as a response to changes in the competition for labour, was downplayed. This finding is in line with a few studies conducted in Western countries (Coughlan, 2000; Osterman, 1995b). The employees however, did stress that the adoption of financial WLB policies is due to the competition and the entrance of new companies in the market.

Why did the organisation adopt family holiday this year? We heard about it three years ago; why were many managers asked to sign a contract with the organisation guaranteeing that they will not leave the organisation for at least five years; this is due to the entrance of new competitors in the marketplace. (Employee 6).

There are new telecommunication companies in the market along with an increase of non-profit institutions, which all offer a competitive salary and less working hours. Given the increasing competition for skilled labour and an increase in opportunities for the workforce to find employment elsewhere, it might not be surprising to see the growing focus on adopting WLB policies to retain employees. This finding is in line with many studies in Western countries (Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Dex and Smith, 2002). Several employees insisted also:

Current provisions such as, financial and flexible policies are in place because of the high concern about retention, and sometimes

attraction of employees... If you are flexible, you will retain and keep people in workplace, especially the highly skilled males and females in the workforce. (Employees 2 and 6).

Flexible and childcare policies appear to be vital for the MobileCom to compete with other institutions in attracting and retaining female employees. Females in Arab society are more attracted to public organisations, and to any organisation that offers limited working hours to enable them to fulfil their family responsibilities. Therefore, the organisation might feel pressured to apply some favourable policies for the female workforce.

The relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and the competition in the marketplace is thus unclear, since because of some cultural reasons discussed in Chapter 7, the views of managers and employees sometimes differed markedly on this relationship.

5.4.6 The Existence of Women in the Workforce

There is a clear relationship between the presence of women in the workforce and the provision of various WLB policies at MobileCom; *"It is consideration of women, which is behind the adoption of many policies of WLB."*(Most of the participants). This response is consistent throughout, and was especially emphasized with regard to the childcare and flexible policies. This is in line with many studies in Western countries (Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Dex and Smith, 2002). An increasing number of married women have exerted a strong pressure on the organisation to include many WLB policies.

About six years ago the childcare policy was adopted by the organisation. Before that, we did not have these benefits. I am sure that this was because the number of women at MobileCom was low at that time. The policies are the result of an increase in the number of women employed, and especially married women who were choosing to have babies. (Manager 1).

When Arab women get married, they used in previous decades to stay at home, or work in place that had limited working hours (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010). Given this cultural element, the organisation feels pressured to increase WLB facilities in the workplace to fulfil the needs of female employees. Numbers of participants added that women workforces have the power to negotiate and discuss their needs with managements.

As women, we have put forward a proposal, with supporting documents, to indicate the level of difficulties encountered in the meetings that have occurred with management. They were respectful and appreciative with respect to our demands. (Employee 17).

The female workforce has the power to negotiate and potentially obtain the policies they seek in order to satisfy personal and family requirements. This could be due to the shortage of highly skilled employees, and also to the existence of labour unions that support the female workforce. This is unlike many Western countries, such as the UK, in which the legislation clearly states that the organisation and managers have to 'reasonably consider' requests.

In the present study, there were no women in senior management roles who could enhance the existence of WLB policies in MobileCom, in contrast to some Western countries (Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003) (according to accounts of Employees 1, 3, and 7). Women in MobileCom are trying to work within a male oriented culture and they feel pressured to present their professional capabilities as women to be similar to those of men. Thus, women in top management might be unlikely to distinguish their role-oriented behaviour, from the behaviour of their male counterparts.

5.4.7 Summary of Reason of Adopting WLB Policies

The Islamic faith and individual social relationships have played a major role in the emergence of a number of WLB policies in the organisation. Networking with international organisations has also been responsible for what may be termed the 'importation' of certain WLB policies in the organisation. The existence of women in the workforce increases the adoption of specific WLB policies in the organisation in MobileCom, as in Western countries (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004). Government regulations have also boosted the adoption of WLB practices in the organisation. Competition and the existence of labour unions were shown to influence the adoption of WLB within the organisation, but more so from the view of the employees than of the employers. This contradiction in accounts primarily reflects some cultural factors, which will be examined later in Chapter 7.

5.5 The Line Manager and Take up of WLB Practices

The behaviour of line managers and its impact on employee take up of WLB practices is scrutinised in this section. The current data indicate that a number of individuals were not able to use many WLB practices due to limited awareness of their line manager about the organisational policies, or his reluctance in applying them.

There are good WLB practices in the organisation, but it seems that our managers do not know them ... there are variations in the interpretation among the managers over the use of numerous WLB policies offered by the organisation. (Employee 17).

One line manager considered that paternity leave should be taken as annual leave. Another was not aware of the existence of any policy in this field. This finding may imply that there is miscommunication in the organisation, which reduces the use of WLB practices by the employees (this has been observed in Western settings – see Breaugh and Frye, 2008; Bond and Wise, 2003). There is thus a manager who is less interested in offering an individual the right to access such emergency leave. Nevertheless, there are also individuals that did not share this view. There are diverse systems in place to facilitate communication within the organisation such as the organisational handbook. In addition, if a new policy is implemented, it is distributed to department managers and employees via email or a newsletter.

I remember that I received an e-mail from the HR department, but I did not read it (words of the line manager)...we use e-mail, but employees ignore it and this is due to the volume of emails that individuals receive. (Employee 6).

There are thus proper communication processes in the organisation which are used to inform individuals in the organisation about any new policies or procedures in the organisation. However, due to the fact that many line managers are very busy, only some managers may follow up on information communicated by e-mail or newsletter, while others may simply ignore e-mails. MobileCom provides during the early stage of their employment, training courses for individuals, including line managers.

We have a training program within the first few weeks of starting our employment, and also over the time, there are also specialised training courses for individuals in most departments...it is like a continuous training program system. (Employees 1 and 5).

However, not all employees attend courses, especially as many line managers are often too busy. Also the cultural dimensions of power distance in an Arab nation (see Aycan, 2000; Kagitcibasi et al., 2010), may play a role in the fact that many managers neglect any training program, or any policies that may reduce their power and increase the freedom of their employees. And the line managers, for socio-cultural reasons seem to give female employees priority in using WLB policies.

Sometime I cannot use my annual leave because many individuals have holidays and I was told to postpone my needs for the future. This could rarely occur for women and even [when there is] ... high pressure at work. When they apply for a leave, they usually get it. (Employee 9).

The line managers still consider that most WLB policies are for women; in contrast to women, men in cultural terms, might have fewer obligations and would be able to reschedule their daily obligations more easily. The data also highlight the Arab stereotype that women are less productive than men. Accordingly, the line managers are less “dependent” on female employees and consequently accept when they request a leave, even in a high pressure work environment. The behaviour of line manager with regards to granting employees the right to make use of the WLB policies is underlined by Islamic and political belief.

If you are a religious person, belong to or support political parties which are not in line with your line manager’s beliefs, you will encounter a problem when taking up leave policies and it could reflect negatively upon your career development. (Employees 15 and 8).

Having a strong Islamic belief, or belonging to a specific Palestinian political party that is not in accord with the line manager’s belief system appears to have an impact on the line manager’s behaviour. Even though this view is shared by only by a few individuals, it is still of interest, as one of the determinants of line managers’ behaviour because Islamic issues and political beliefs are a vital part of Palestinian society. The behaviour of a line manager towards the employee is also influenced by other Arab attitudes such as the age of the individual who wants to use WLB benefits.

It is difficult to let those people [old people] down. They are like our fathers. We are used to help them and sometimes give them priority

in the work schedule ... Islam and the rules of the society teach us this. (Employee 15).

This is a reflection of Arabic culture, in which older people should be respected and helped. And giving preference to old rather than young employees reflects the fact that in Palestinian society, older people are still valued and respected (Nydell, 2002; Aycan, 2000). Apart from a few line managers, the majority of them are friendly in their interpersonal style, and they try to create a family-like atmosphere with their employees.

The line manager works according to the principle of the 'Jawwal Family'. We look after each other... he is a co-operative and friendly person. He deals with us as brothers or sisters. In case of the absence of any colleague, the manager and other employees take care of the duties for which the absentee is responsible. (Employee 10).

The concept of "MobileCom Family culture" (see section 5.3.6) is highlighted as a factor that enhances the level of use of WLB practices at MobileCom. In this culture, individuals in the organisation try to work together like a family. In case of any demands to reduce the working hours for a personal purpose, the line manager may offer assistance, adopting a "transformational" leadership style. However, there are a few employees who believe that the take-up of WLB practices is not always determined in accordance with Jawwal Family considerations. Rather, in their view, preference appears to depend on the type of personal relationship between the line manager and the employee.

Everything in this department depends on your relation with the [line] manager. If you drink a coffee with him outside, help him to get information about work, or have family relationship, the line manager will be helpful. (Employee 15).

This is sometimes referred to as *Wasta*, a form of personal favouritism, which is common in most of the Arab countries (Hayajenh et al., 1994; Smith et al., 2012). It impacts upon the use of WLB practices by the employees. The type of relationship between the line manager and employees determines the level of use of WLB policies. This is even the case if an employee has officially no right to use a specific policy. The *Wasta* is sometime difficult to avoid, due to societal and family pressures (Smith et al., 2012; Loewe et al., 2007).

Participants did state that the behaviour of line managers in discriminating between individuals, specifically giving preference to female and older employees rather than young men is not a key issue. It did not seem to have a negative impact on employees' attitude and they did not see the WLB practices as inefficient because of this issue, as might be seen in studies in European countries (Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Woodhams and Lupton; 2006). In contrast, the conclusion drawn in the present study is that most employees appreciate this behaviour of line managers and accept it within the organisation.

It is very common that women are allowed to leave work before I leave in order to sort out some work...moreover, the elderly are respected in society and it is a shame not to help them. (Employee, 16).

Discrimination of line managers in favour of the interests of women and older people did not impact negatively upon individuals overall, and this is because there is still no equality in terms of gender in this society. It is also in accord with Islamic cultural influences as to why line managers and individuals behave this way, and is accepted by individuals in the organisation (Hofstede, 2001; Aycan and Eskin, 2005). The non-existence of perceived negative impacts through the decisions of the line managers upon employees is also related to the "Jawwal family culture" norm in which most line managers, top management or employees cooperate and help each other in requesting help (Employee 1). In this way the cooperative culture in the MobileCom enhances the use and the implementation of WLB practices in favour of many employees. More than half of the research participants mentioned this.

He [the line manager] is really a supportive person. He helped me and others to use a study leave and flexible policies ... he persuaded the top management to allow one woman to take a year's holiday after birth. (Employee 10 and 1).

The line manager might even take up the work of the person who is on leave. This behaviour appears to be in accord with a transformational leadership style that encourages the employees to make use of innovative practices such as WLB and assists them in adopting them (Mandell and Pherwani, 2003; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007). This is an unusual style of leadership in the Arab context, because Palestinian culture is characterised by high power distance, which generally means that increases in flexibility and support of the

organisation towards individuals might be less prevalent (Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007; As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006). Nevertheless, an individual said:

I am really concerned, and sometimes scared, to use my allowable policies because this will affect my annual evaluation. Such a thing happened last year. He is really a dictator person. (Employee 6).

This is the usual leadership style in Arab society reflecting “transactional leadership” (Jogulu, 2010; As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006). This behaviour is a reflection of the paternalism of Palestinian culture which is characterised by an admiration for strength and power of charismatic individuals, as opposed to the power of law. Reflecting this, in TeleCom, some managers were less cooperative and understanding of the needs of certain employees. It was unusual to give employees the right to manage their time, contribute, cooperate, and assist the organisation in the management process, which is the case in many European contexts (Jogulu, 2010; Holt and Seki, 2012). The observed leadership style might be from the result of some specific characteristics of MobileCom, and the age profile of the employees.

Although the present study is not concerned about the impact of the behaviour of line manager on employee attitudes, it is of interest to address this issue to guide for future research. Different leadership styles appear to have different effects on individuals in the organisation. There are many employees who observed that the positive behaviour of the line manager’s “transformation leadership” enhanced and improved their attitude and behaviour in the organisation such as “I am so happy to work with this supervisor”. This has also a positive effect on their loyalty, commitment, and motivation.

I am so happy to work with this supervisor... I can do anything he wants without any hesitation... I feel a high commitment and motivation to work. (Employee 17).

The impact of line managers on individuals’ attitudes might be stronger here than in many Western contexts (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Purcell et al., 2003). This may be due to the fact that individuals recognize the good behaviour of the line manager in giving them freedom and flexibility, which is uncommon in Arab society. This might not be salient in many Western contexts, because such behaviour by the line managers is considered common (Wang and Walumbwa, 2007; Shiha et al., 2010). This, however, is not the case

within a transactional leadership style context. However, the data indicate that the transactional leadership style's negative impact on employees was not very strong.

It doesn't matter whether I prefer this or not. It will occur and happen anyhow. I mean that, when the line manager or the top manager says that they need to change policies, and working system, who can say no...we have to accept it...It is also because we are Muslim and we should accept everything because the God has written the thing for us, and we should happy by the good or the bad thing. (Employee 15).

Individuals accept the behaviour of line managers as authoritarian, because this is embedded in Arab society where old people control the young, and husbands control their wives and children. Within the different power levels of the Arab society, individuals might accept this style of leadership and continue to work under it. This might also be the case in terms of discrimination according to the *Wasta* principle. The Islamic belief that God determines the future of any individual, also contributes to the limited negative impact which such authoritarianism has upon individual behaviour. Individuals thus become less sensitive, in a negative sense, towards such behaviour. This interesting issue needs to be investigated in further studies.

5.5.1 Summary of the Role of Line Manager

There is some lack of awareness of employees' needs or wishes by line managers of the MobileCom WLB practices; nevertheless, this is not a major problem for employees, and the organization offers training programs which can increase awareness and sensitivity. Some behaviours of the line managers indicate that women, elderly people, and the individual's Islamic and political beliefs may often been seen favourably in the allocation of WLB benefits. This "bias" is not prevalent in many recent studies in Western countries, which is probably due to the fact that these countries already support gender equality patterns (Winslow, 2005; O'Brien et al., 2007). The age factor and the concordance of Islamic and political beliefs are new findings that add to the WLB literature. In addition to humanitarian principles, which line managers embrace in order to give their employees access to WLB policies, there is also the factor of personal relationships between individuals - "*Wasta*" - which is used in applying WLB policies. In addition to the transactional leadership of

Arab society and the paternalistic culture of individual patronage, MobileCom also has a strong family, cooperative culture and the transformational leadership style accords with these values: these all assist individuals to access and use WLB policies.

5.6 The Take-Up of WLB Policies in the MobileCom

This section discusses some further barriers which may hinder the use of WLB practices in the organisation under study. The discussion focuses initially on the barriers encountered by employees during the take up of flexible and leave practices. Next, the financial and childcare practices are considered, and then the social and religious policies are discussed. Each of these sub-sections offers a table outlining the number of users and non-users of the WLB practices.

5.6.1 The Take-up of Flexible and Leave WLB Practices

Flexible and Leave WLB practices	No of users of practices		No of non-users of practices	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Teleworking	1	1	7	8
Flexitime working	2	2	7	7
Part-time working	1	3	7	6
One hour reduction for women	-	6	8	3
Paid annual Vacation	9	9	0	0
Paid Breast Feeding Leave	-	9	-	0
Paid Maternity Leave	0	9	8	0
Paid Sick Leave	8	9	0	0
Unpaid Parental Leave for Women	-	3	-	6
Bereavement Leave	4	5	4	4
Honeymoon Leave	4	5	4	4
Paid Emergency Leave	6	9	2	0
Paternity Leave for Men	5	0	3	9
Paid Study Leave	4	1	4	8

Table 10: Take Up of Flexible and Leave WLB Practices in the MobileCom

Few employees use the part-time, flexitime and teleworking practices. Concerning the practice of one-hour reduction, all women used it. There was also a limited use of the leave practices: for example, 5 out of 16 used study leave and 3 out of 9 women used the parental leave. Even though many other

leave policies such as the sick leave are used by all individuals, the barrier to using these practices by employees are still the case in terms of line manager disapproval (see section 5.5). The use of flexible and leave practices encounters the problem of limited awareness of the existence of these practices in the MobileCom.

I know that women have a one-hour reduction in the winter-term, but to work part-time, paternity leave, study leave or Teleworking I think they are not available. (Employee 1).

The limited awareness most individuals have appears to have reduced the use of the available WLB practices; this is in line with findings in many Western countries, such as the UK (Skinner et al., 2004; Wise, 2005). The employees also did not use the flexible policies because they perceived them as being more relevant for female employees: *"It is not common to have part-time [work] because it is more for women."* (Employee 8). Female orientation in WLB is often the case in MobileCom; there is still less emphasis on considering WLB policies for both genders, as has been reported in Western organisations (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Crompton, 2006). The demand for teleworking, part-time, long leave practices and other forms of leave is limited among men due to the fact that the use of these policies would reduce working hours, and hence reduce the level of income.

I would like to do extra work rather than to work part-time or taking long leave policies. There are huge financial responsibilities I have to sort out... If I stay at home the people around me will ask why I do so. They will ask if I have been fired or if I am a woman... (Employees 13 and 8).

Apart from two males who used part-time and teleworking policies, most men highlighted that they had to work long hours to secure necessary financial resources, rather than working part-time or having long leave practices which would reduce income – a similar finding to those in some Western cultures (Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). This reflects male oriented gender culture, where men perceive themselves as 'the breadwinner'. In Palestine men also are expected to work outside, and not at home like women. It is something of a disgrace and rather undesirable in Palestine to see men spending their time at home. Most women however, insist on the importance of flexible policies because they are helping them to accommodate some cultural norms.

Flexible work is good for me because my husband and his family are not happy at my work in a place where other men are present, “mixed-gender”. Also I am not earning the main income in the family; anything I add is fine and is acceptable according to my husband’s belief. (Employee 16).

Working from home for some women, helps them to avoid reservations which could be voiced by society or husbands about working in a mixed-gender workplace. Some men, based on an Islamic belief, still in the recent past preferred to see their wives working in a non-mixed-gender workplace. The flexible policies can offer women an outlet to persuade their family and husband to tolerate their continuing to work and this consequently allows them to gain further freedom and independence (Kargwell, 2008). Men are less interested in part time roles:

If you check my attendance days for the last year, you will find a limited use of my right for any leave or flexible policies. It has a negative impact upon my promotion...instead I work long hours to develop further in the organisation and have a nice position in the future...The more you use the leave policies, the more negative impact you receive in your career development. (Employees 8 and 9).

In the male oriented culture in Palestine, most men aspire to be at least skilled workers, and professionals if educational achievement will allow (Aycan, 2000; Hofstede, 2001). At all levels of work, men are less likely to use policies that could weaken their identity, affect their future goals and their “work-prestige” position in the society.

My life is in the workplace and meeting people outside; it is not to stay at home or having long holidays or reducing my working hours... This is rather the case for women who need a lot of time to take care of their family. (Employee 13).

Working time is not seen as conflicting with family life; the family and working life are seen to complement each other for individuals who are working to support their family. This is not typically the case in many Western contexts where there is a clear separation between family and working life which in turn may increase an individual’s stress with regard to voicing a request for flexible policies (Aycan and Eskin, 2005; Spector et al., 2004; Hofstede, 1998). Most women did not mention this issue as overtly stressful, because they still considered themselves to be primarily homemakers within traditional cultural norms; nevertheless,

conflict (and the implicit role strain) between work and personal life did emerge. Thus women request more flexible leave policies:

Five days later, my husband was thinking to go back to work and he was used to be outside with other people all the time. I was thinking about my new life and new family, how will I cope with it and win their love. (Employee 3).

Newly married women such as this employee, have normative role obligations such as, accommodating the husband's attitude and his family, housekeeping, and cooking their husband's favourite dishes! Due to anxiety about not meeting husband's expectations, women were exposed to additional stress and might request more holidays to manage these issues. In contrast, men adopted the role of "ruler of the house", and they also expected to get back to "normal working life" quickly after any family event or crisis. Conversely, women often felt, in a male oriented culture, constant pressure to be a "good wife", rather than seeing her life in the workplace as most important, or having a career oriented focus.

I was promoted to a higher scale, but I failed to accept it because it is not possible to leave my family/home duties; my children and husband have priority in my life...My family also did not allow me to do so. (Employee 6).

After marriage, working full-time or studying is difficult because I have to work harder to meet the needs of my husband... men do not prefer that their wife is highly educated or earning more money than him because he will feel that he is not a man, or that I will control him. (Employee 17).

Women are less concerned about promotion and career orientations because this is not their main role in the culture of male dominance. Apart from two women interviewed at TeleCom, most females accepted their culturally ordained role: they are raised to be a good wife, housekeeper and mother (cf Hofstede, 1983; Kargwell, 2008). Parents instil in women the need to take care of their family and husbands in the future. It is common for men to refuse marriage to a woman who works as, say, a manager or doctor. Thus, a professional life is less vital for women than their family life. This is unlike many Western contexts (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Crompton et al., 2005). There were only two women in the study who highlighted the importance of promotion in the organisation.

Although it is quite hard to get promoted, especially with family duties, I am interested in developing further ... They [children] are not my boys alone, they are my husband's too, and so he should help me. (Employee 7).

Some women at MobileCom did not intend to use the part-time work options, because it would impact negatively on their career development. This is a liberal gender attitude (cf Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Crompton, 2005), in which women are engaged in a “man’s role”, caring about promotion. This phenomenon contradicts the prevailing culture of Palestine. Some women interviewed additionally mentioned that men should engage in home duties, because they both work. This shows some emerging changes in Palestinian culture, but still in a very limited degree, as this view was expressed by only two women. The flexitime policy has a limited impact on a men’s income. Its use and demand is limited as it is difficult to plan ahead for urgent needs that could arise at any time.

Flexible policies are a fixed program. You have to work under a specific time schedule. If something happens out of this schedule, we will not be able to do use flexible policies, except to have an emergency leave. (Employee 1).

Males in contrast with females were of the opinion that flexible practices are not relevant for their particular needs, a view found in other studies (Sheridan, 2004; Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Prowse and Prowse, 2010). This is likely due to the fact that women have specific duties to arrange their time accordingly.

A number of employees mentioned that emergency leave was essential to accommodate sudden needs for time-off: *“My son broke his leg last month and I took him to hospital”*. (Employee 13). Individuals can leave work right away by using their emergency leave. It is difficult to get a leave outside the annual holidays because of its processing time. Hence, an emergency leave is a viable alternative that enhances a person’s control in obtaining a short period of leave. Including flexitime users, most males have used the leave policy to cope with their obligations in society, such as urgent accidents, fulfilling social activities, fixing water pumps, electricity, etc. (Employees 8 and 9). One individual added: *“Flexitime policies increase the time to sort out paying bills, shopping, having a rest in the afternoon”*. (Employee 2). These are the main reasons, which are

consistent with the male oriented gender culture of Palestine. However, two males reported the following:

Flexitime helps me to help my children in wearing their clothes and preparing food for them in the morning before they go to school (Employee 12). I used part-time work to look after my father in the hospital. (Employee 15).

This is a form of male commitment to adopt women's roles, but this perception is very limited and applied only to two of the males interviewed at MobileCom. Hence, it is difficult to argue that the male dominant culture has really changed.

This is also represented in regard to the use of the paternity leave for men:

It is a nice policy, but three days are not really needed. It is just at the time of birth, when we need to complete the child registration forms at the hospital and during this time my mother/mother-in-law, stays with my wife. (Employee 1).

This finding is consistent with the conclusions offered by other scholars where a masculine oriented culture is still a barrier to the demand for paternity leave in most of Arab societies (Dimba and K'obonyo, 2007). A few days of leave is sufficient in Arab countries compared to the long leaves sometimes found in Western countries. An extended family support system is still available under these special circumstances, which subsequently reduces the leave demands of male employees. However, three male users of the paternity leave policy mentioned that this policy was vital to help the wife and the family during childbirth.

I am excited to have access to a paternity leave. Before adopting this policy I used to take two days off to help my wife and family in this special occasion. I have a lot to do during the first days after birth such as cleaning house, caregiver for my children as so on. (Employee 2).

Men at MobileCom are involved in looking after their wife, family and home during childbirth days. Yet, although birth is a special event, males will help their family and wives mainly during the first few days, but then will leave those duties again to their women and extended family. The assistance offered by men is limited to a few days; hence there is no emphasis on having more extended leave policies. The use and demand of flexible policies by female employees was to fulfil more fully their family needs. They do not use them for social activities or any other interests shared by their male counterparts.

Part-time work helps me to manage the needs of my four children and my husband. I am left to take care of them alone (Employee 6)... After marriage I used to get up early in the morning, at 5:50 am to prepare the kids for school and then go to work at 7 in the morning instead of 8, and then finish at 2:00, which is a good time to prepare the food for the family. (Employee 17).

Unlike men, women use flexible policies to satisfy the needs of their family. This distinction in the use of flexible practices may not be as prevalent in many Western countries. There is limited exchange of gender roles between men and women, while in many Western context, both genders may use leave policies because a child is ill (Thompson and Prottas, 2006). Although this pattern appears to be an additional burden for female employees, there is no real change with regard to their role in the society.

5.6.2 The Take-up of Childcare and Financial WLB Policies

Childcare and Financial Policies	No of users of practices		No. Of Non-Users of practices	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Subsidy Study	3	2	5	7
Childcare Centre	5	6	3	3
Health Insurance	8	9	0	0
Family Trip	5	7	3	2
Sport and Leisure Facilities	8	9	0	0

Table 11: Take Up of Childcare and Financial WLB Practices in MobileCom

Five individuals made use of the Subsidy for Study policy. The health insurance and leisure facilities have been used by all employees. Thirteen participants have used the family trip policy. This indicates that there is a significant level of usage of some financial policies. A few individuals from the non-users of the 'subsidy for study' considered that *Wasta* which is common in Arab society, determined the use of financial policies.

Subsidies for study cost are not available in the organisation ... It might happen, but it is more for special people and those in high positions within the organisation or those who have a mediator that can help them. (Employee 15).

Some individuals asserted that the uses of financing policies related to WLB are strongly connected with the individual's position at MobileCom, and their

personal relationship with people in top management. Although some people might not fulfil the pre-conditions to access some policies, they could use them because of their personal relationship with top management. Because in Arab male oriented culture financial issues are the men's responsibility, men often preferred money to family trips.

It is a nice practice, but it might be better for us if the organisation gives the expenses for these trips to us directly and let employees choose if they want to travel. (Employee 1).

MobileCom offers limited financial coverage for family trips. Female employees did not mention this issue directly. They were happy however, when they could persuade their husband to have a trip that was almost free. It is an opportunity for women to travel, which is not very common. Because of gender roles, women are less concerned about expenses in contrast to men: *"If I get money instead of a trip, my husband will take it and transfer it soon into his savings account."*(Employee 16). Conversely, men might already engage in travel or other social events, and are therefore less interested in trips.

Apart from the family trips policy, individuals knew about, and planned to use at some stage, all of the other financial WLB practices. Subsidies for studies were demanded and used to fulfil individual needs of sending their children to internationally recognized universities rather than those in Palestine. Universities in Palestine are not very well developed, and are costly (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003; Rihan, 2001). This use also applied to other financial policies.

Health insurance is wonderful, covering the cost of everything. It saves us a lot of money, particularly when we need to pay for a private health centre or a specialist... It helps us avoiding the [poor quality] public health care system here in Palestine. (Employee 7).

Financial policies are crucial for individuals. They make up for the deficiencies in the Palestinian welfare system. There are public hospitals in Palestine but they are undeveloped, and hardly cover basic medical needs of Palestinians (Devi, 2004). This finding is consistent with many studies in developing countries (Wang et al., 2008).

One third of the participants made use of the childcare facilities. In contrast to a small numbers of non-users, the users of this policy highlighted the importance

and need of the childcare centre. This need is not only with respect to the costs they used to pay for a private childcare centre. Private childcare and the extended family do not cover the time requirements for work and commuting time.

Instead of finding a place with my mother or mother-in-law to look after my baby, I can now take the baby to the nursery of the organisation ... and avoid asking for favours or non-availability of anybody at home. (Employees 7 and 10).

The childcare policy is vital for employees, because of limited extended family support. Families are often unable to sort out their responsibilities with regard to their children and sometimes the extended family care is not available. The conclusion obtained in this study would imply that some changes in society are occurring as more participants use the WLB childcare policies rather than relying on their personal support system. Half of the female employees commented along the following lines:

Instead of finding a place with my mother or mother-in-law to look after my baby, I can now take him to my work and thus my husband will be happy instead of wasting his time ... while I avoid potential problems he could raise due to this issue. (Employees 4 and 11).

Clearly, in Palestinian society, women are more concerned with childcare policies than men. If any challenges are encountered with regard to childcare, it is generally women that deal with the issue. This even entails potential absences from work. The decline in reliance on the extended family for childcare is evident, but the support system still exists as outlined by various employees.

I do not like my children being brought up by someone who does not know them... I used to ask my mother and my mother-in-law to help us (Employee 7). I do not want my wife to work. Her duty is to look after my children, even though I live with my extended family, which can look after my children better than a childcare centre. (Employee 17).

The extended family support system and presence of single income families reduce the demands for childcare. This finding does mainly apply to developing countries that are considered a collectivist culture based on strong interpersonal relationships among individuals.

5.6.3 The Take-up of the Social and Religious WLB Policies

The Social/Religious Policies	No of Users of practices		No of Non-users of practices	
	Male	Female	Male	Male
Personal Phone Call	6	5	2	1
Personal Visitor	7	5	1	1
Break for Praying	8	6	0	0
Hajj Vacation	3	2	5	4
2 hours reduction in Ramadan	8	6	0	0

Table 12: Take Up of Social and Religious WLB Practices in MobileCom

Five out of 14 employees have not used social policies. They perceived their line manager as a barrier. Most employees however use the social policies to fulfil various needs. Men use the social policies to comply with family needs, setting up meetings with friends, as well as urgent needs of wife and children. Women also use the social policies to satisfy the demands the less urgent needs of their children, cooking, housekeeping, and chatting with other mothers and friends. In summary, the use of social policies differs markedly by gender.

One third of the participants admitted that female employees use the phone more than men. Women are more inclined to call their mothers and mothers-in-law to talk about cooking, their husband, and the children: *“I am used to call my mum every day to hear the latest news and ask about some family or women issues.”* (Woman 17). Many males confirmed this view and mentioned various events where women were criticised for the excessive use of the phone: *“It is not for chatting or just to have a call.”*(Employee 13). Overall, the data shows that females used the social policies more than males. This finding differs from many studies in Western countries, where a difference between genders with regard to the use of mobile phones was not as prevalent (Lemish and Cohen, 2005).

However, several women offered opinions that varied with then general conclusion presented above, and insisted that they used the social policies only

for urgent matters; and that men sometimes used the phone more frequently. Some women may be concerned not to mention issues which might impact negatively on their reputation as an employee. From a cultural perspective, the phone could help females to lessen distance from other people, a practice influenced by Palestinian cultural norms (Lemish and Cohen, 2005).

Most employees are able to embrace religious practice concessions. Seven non-users of Hajj policies were found, but this is due to the fact that Hajj needs financial resources, travelling abroad, and reservations. Some individuals are able to cope with these demands and engaged in the Hajj, while others delayed it. Apart from the individual's belief in Islam, the obstacles for an individual to ignore the Islamic policy are limited. This is because the five pillars of Islam are presumed to be fulfilled by all Muslims (Kamali, 2003; Kamal-ud-Din, 2010). Some employees may be less engaged with religious practices, but identifying them is difficult, because they will not publicly share their disengagement for reasons of 'social desirability'. In the use of Islamic policies such as the reduction of working hours in the Ramadan Month of fasting, deference to males still predominates:

In Ramadan, I need time to sleep, and for Salat [praying], and vitally I also needed enough time to prepare food, drinks, and sweets for family and visitors. (Employee 3 and 11, Women) ... I need to sleep in the mosque, pray, read Quran at night in the last 10 days of Ramadan. This forces me to attend to work late and to finish early...I did the Hajj twice in the last 6 years. (Employee 15, Man).

Women are less strongly engaged as men in some Islamic practices, such as spending less time sleeping in the mosque, and reading the Qur'an. This is tolerable in Islam, as women are still fulfilling the main five pillars. Nevertheless, women like men are supposed to do Hajj because it is mandatory for all Muslims and should be completed at least once in a lifetime. If an individual dies before doing Hajj, other Muslim people could do the Hajj on behalf of the dead person.

5.6.4 Summary of the Take-Up of WLB Policies in the Organisation

The lack of awareness of individuals of the organisations available policies, and the *Wasta* principle are some of the barriers to using the WLB practices in the MobileCom. Additionally, most men have been found to be less interested in the

majority of flexible and leave WLB policies for various reasons. First, the use of many WLB policies impacts negatively on men's assumed role as primary breadwinner; second, their concerns about promotion and career development in the organization may inhibit their take-up of these benefits (also reported by Sheridan, 2004; Hall and Atkinson, 2006). With regard to women, the flexible and leave policies were crucial to satisfy their family needs. Having flexible or leave policies enables women to overcome some problems, which derived from the cultural and lifestyle system of the Arab society.

Few men have used flexible policies to comply with family obligations. A few women have also expressed their intention to focus on promotions and their income. This phenomenon is, however, very limited and it would be difficult to argue on this evidence that the role of gender has changed in Palestinian society, compared with Western cultures (cf Crompton et al., 2005). Childcare policies received significant interest, because there is an increase of individuals who live away from their extended families, for a variety of reasons, some chosen but at other times a reflection of political circumstances in a geographically divided country. The entire workforce displays a need for the leave and financial policies, although to differing degrees. Women mentioned the importance of WLB practices in order to comply with their perceived or culturally required obligations as women and caregivers. Men indicated that many WLB practices were vital for them, but mainly to fulfil their obligations as men in the culture of Palestine. There was only a small overlap between genders in the take-up of WLB practices.

C H A P T E R S I X

T H E T E L E C O M C O M P A N Y C A S E S T U D Y

6.1. Introduction

This Chapter outlines the data analysis of interviews conducted within TeleCom in Palestine. After giving a brief background about the characteristics and the context of TeleCom, the chapter will be then divided according to the four objectives of the current research which are: a) To review and understand the current WLB policies in TeleCom, b) The reasons behind the adoption of WLB policies in TeleCom, c) The role and the behaviour of line managers and their impact upon the employee's take up of WLB practices, and d) To examine the extent to which employees' access and use WLB practices.

6.2. Background on the Context of the TeleCom

The TeleCom is one of the main Palestinian telecommunication service providers. It was publically owned by the government before its privatisation in 1995. It provides landlines, telephone services and internet services. The TeleCom is part of the Palestinian Telecommunications Group "PALTEL"; this group has many organisations which provide electronic communication and media services (Hijazeh, 2011). TeleCom is the mother of PALTEL group; it was established in 1993 to provide most of the of PALTEL group telecommunication services. Over the course of time, TeleCom became divided into different companies; each one having its own business field (Hijazeh, 2011).

In 2004, the Telecom provided only basic telephone, and internet services. The number of lines in this year increased by 20%, amounting to around 349,000 lines. These lines serve around 90% of the Palestinian people. The TeleCom has since its inception, invested about JD\$ 131,625,000, and its shareholders reached 7,499 by December 31, 2011 (PALTEL, 2011). The shareholders include a broad range of companies, institutions, legal bodies, and private investors including small scale investors to prominent private individuals, as well as large organisations (Ali, 2007; Hijazeh, 2011).

The Telecom is encountering increased competition in the marketplace from the cellular wireless companies, as well as the increasing number of companies that offer Internet services. The use of cellular technology has continued to

develop in Palestine and has reached a sufficient level to become a threat to companies that are only serving fixed-line phone users. In comparison to wireless based telecommunications, fixed-line services numbered 380,000 by 2011, an increase of 6.06% (PALTEL, 2011). The Wireless provision increased during this period by 7.4% to reach 2,420,000 subscribers in 2011.

The TeleCom structured the working system and technology of the workplace modelled on some technologies and experience of international organisations such as Sweden (PALTEL, 2007). Foreign consultancy institutions such as Oracle designed the system of accounting, payroll, and the marketing of the TeleCom. At the beginning of the work of TeleCom, many workers attend courses abroad in Arab and European countries, but this has decreased over time (Hijazeh, 2011). The Telecom Company is recruiting talented graduates, and a number of higher managers who have professional experience in international organisations and Arab organisations, such as Vodaphone, Orange, and Oracle.

The TeleCom requires a high level of English language proficiency in order to fulfil the demands of the management and the technology systems of the organisation which are undertaken in the English language (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007). The TeleCom uses online recruitment system to reach a wider pool of potential employees. It also offers a training program to newly hired employees, and also deploys new projects or systems. The TeleCom has also an email service and Intranet system which the company uses to get any employees' feedback and concerns; a brainstorming session is held within the TeleCom if a significant issue from the employees demands this (Hijazeh, 2011; Ali, 2007).

There are many benefits for the workforce in the TeleCom. It offers for example, health care coverage for the full-time employees, disability/invalidity coverage, Maternity/Paternity Leave, a competitive salary, annual dividends, and end of service pay (PALTEL, 2012). Additionally, individuals in the TeleCom have many other leave arrangement benefits and a childcare centre for women workforces. Paternity leave for men does not exist in the TeleCom (PALTEL, 2011).

The inception of WLB policies in the TeleCom is derived from many changes in the socio-cultural pattern of society. These are for example, physical separation of family members, reduced household sizes, weakened or disrupted traditional kinship style, and an increase in women in the workforce. These changes in the cultural structure of society (see section 2.5) together with other factors such as the relationship with international organisation were considered the main reasons behind the inception of WLB policies in the organisation; all of these reasons will be reviewed and discussed later in this chapter.

The TeleCom offers a high level of job security and is continuously seeking to attract and retain high quality talent (PALTEL, 2005; Hijazeh, 2011). Most of the workers have work experiences in the modern science of management and technology systems. However, the TeleCom still has a proportion of workers who are quite older, and less innovative individuals. Those people worked in the TeleCom when it belonged to the public sector. Because of this, the level of modern management system in TeleCom is less developed than that of the MobileCom.

The TeleCom is one of the largest organisations in the PALTEL Group, with around 1000-1300 employees who work in all of the directorates and branches in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Female employees constitute about 21% of the total staff (PALTEL, 2011). In addition to branches and showrooms, the organisation has two main offices, one in the Gaza Strip and another in the West Bank. They are the head offices for the principal people in the organisation. The senior staff of the marketing directorate for example, is located in the West Bank, along with a Vice-President in the Gaza Strip. The work of the marketing division is organised according to a functional system that is divided into departments, such as: advertising and market communication, marketing intelligence, and servicing department. Within each department, there are employees who are working under direct supervisors.

In addition to this marketing division, many others were considered in addition to those in the sample study, such the HRM Division, Sales management, and

the Operation and Engineering Departments. Across most of these departments, a number of interviews were conducted. The characteristics and the number of interviewees of the sample were outlined before in the Research Methodology Chapter (see section 4.9.1.2).

6.3. The WLB Policies in the TeleCom

Based on the accounts of the TeleCom managers, this section is concerned with the formally adopted WLB policies, as opposed to the actual practices in the organisation.

The formal WLB policies found in the TeleCom workplace, aim in formal terms to satisfy the need of individuals and their working lives by means of part-time, annual leave, sick leave, childcare, flexitime and other benefits. In addition there are WLB policies found in the TeleCom which are relevant in an Arabic society such as time for prayer, Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah), Ummrah (Pilgrimage), personal visitors during working hours, and health insurance.

Individuals here have some financial support and time for some social and religious matter such as, time for prayer...whereas the financial policies were set to assist workforces and their families in their life and reduce stress on them...because social or religious issues are essential in the community to fulfil the individual religious need, for example prayer. (Manager 4).

Thus there are new policies in the organisation, which are focused upon fulfilling the needs of social, religious and financial, and welfare support. As discussed later, these policies have been part of WLB policies which have the aim of assisting workforces in order to balance between working time and personal responsibilities.

It was notable that the TeleCom is applying five WLB policies in the workplace which include 1) Flexible WLB Policies, 2) leave WLB policies, and 3) Childcare WLB policy (similar to policies described in Western literature - Torrington et al., 2005; Lewis and Campbell, 2008). 4) The financial WLB policies, and 5) the social and religious WLB policies. These groups of WLB policies and their associated policies are examined below in more detail.

6.3.1. The Flexible WLB Policies of the TeleCom

There are only two policies in the TeleCom which are in line with the definition of the flexible policies found in Western countries (see Lewis and Campbell, 2008) in terms of granting individuals the ability to set their own working hours according to their personal needs. These policies focus on part-time and flexitime working. The Western literature has described more flexible policies such as compressed working, annual hours etc (McKee, 2000; Fleetwood, 2007). These policies are not available in the TeleCom. Due to some cultural factors, discussed later, women in winter season have a right to one hour reduction every day from working hours.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study Two
1.	Annual Hours	Flexible	No
2.	Job Sharing	Flexible	No
3.	Term-time Working	Flexible	No
4.	Compressed Working	Flexible	No
5.	Working from Home	Flexible	No
6.	Flexitime Working	Flexible	Yes
7.	Part-time Working	Flexible	Yes
8.	One-hour reduction for women	Flexible	Yes

Table 13: Flexible WLB Policies of the TeleCom

Part-time working and the flexitime working policies have been adopted in a limited way in the organisation. As a participant stated:

The part-time or flexitime policies are one of our own strategies that the organisation has adopted to fulfil the personal needs of employees; they [flexible policies] are applied in very limited option. Flexitime is applied under one hour's flexibilities in the morning time. (Manager 8).

Flexible WLB policies are applied in the TeleCom, but on a very limited scale. The part-time working is used under a specific schedule of having a 3 days working in the week instead of 5-days. The flexible policies are limited and could be found in specific organisations like the present one to comply with some changes of the demands of women in the workforces, and some changes in the culture of Palestine:

Flexible policies emerged recently to fulfil needs of social change in the market in terms of women who are now in the market and also

along with high obligations they have...there are no rules of the government in this respect; it is only applied due to the interest and goal of organisation. (Manager 3).

It is evident that the flexible policies emerged recently (within the past five years) in the TeleCom with increased number of women in the workforce, and changes in the cultural system of less dependency upon the extended family. Given this a number of flexible policies have become vital in the workplace, and these are mainly for women. It is a fact that men in Arabic societies still usually do not help women in their home responsibilities. The trend towards women-friendly policies presented also through the existence of the one-hour reduction for female staff during the winter term. At TeleCom women are entitled to leave at 3:00pm instead of 4:00pm every day during the winter season. This policy emerged as a result of some Islamic beliefs rooted deeply in society. The limited existence of flexible policies might also be related to the issue of less market pressure for long working hours, and the lower interest of the majority of men in the flexible WLB policies:

Why should the organisation engage heavily in such a new system of management that is not necessary either for the organisation or for most of its employees who are men? ... the marketplace is not highly developed to work long a hours. (Manager 1).

Many flexible policies such as term-time flexibility, job sharing, annual leave policy, and part-time working are not particularly important for men due to their potentially negative impact upon the level of income (see section 6.6.1). The organisation at present has no strong market pressures which would justify asking for more working hours from employees, to satisfy the need of customers. There are some levels of development in the Palestinian market, but not enough to increase working hours of the organisation, and hence increase the numbers needing flexible working hours, in contrast to many Western countries (Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003). The limited adoption of flexible policies is also related to the benefits of using the flexible policies:

In the future the organisation will adopt other flexible policies in the workplace but this will require both time and resource. (Manager 4).

The TeleCom is reluctant to engage vigorously in new policies that might not be beneficial for it; in contrast with many Western contexts, the TeleCom is surviving within a very unfavourable political and economic situation, and also

with limited governmental support (MAS, 2010; Nydell, 2002). These factors influence the organisation to become generally unresponsive to new ideas for flexible WLB policies.

Furthermore, this policy is sometimes applied according to certain humanitarian principles and reciprocal benefits; that is, the benefits are not the same for all workers in the TeleCom. The introduction of benefits depends on certain cases that management can decide on. For example there are two women from the IT department who work from home because of some special domestic problems (Manager 6). Another Manager also stated that:

Whether in regard to Flexible policies, or any other, the organisation is neither restricted nor rigid in the terms of the implementation of their policies ... if someone said that they have to study on a course or that their children need special treatment ... then what we can do; we are human beings and should help each other... (Manager 1).

This type of management is clearly affected by Palestinian cultural norms and covers a large part of the policies of the TeleCom. It should be pointed out that the existence of a strong relationship between individuals within society originates from Islamic culture (Kamali, 2003; Lundblad, 2008). These factors of culture and humanity contribute to the principles by which the TeleCom is managed. Even though, the principles on which most of flexible WLB policies of the organisation are culturally influenced, they are also applied according to specific regulations.

Most of flexible policies, as well as others, are adopted formally in the organisation. For example leaving 2 hour earlier one day and then working more hours the next day is not allowed... Everything is according to a formal format and schedule within the organisation. (Managers 3 and 6).

These Managers indicated that the WLB policies in the organisation are applied formally; and not informally, based upon *ad hoc* system (see Atkinson and Hall, 2009). Therefore, according to the HR regulations individuals cannot access flexitime working based on the personal decision of his or her line manager or as a consequence of personal arrangements between employees and line managers, but according to certain and formal HR procedures.

To sum up, it is clear that the flexible WLB policies were often found in the TeleCom under specific schedule options, indicating that the application of these policies is not typical, compared with a Western context.

6.3.2 The Leave Arrangement WLB Policies of the TeleCom

Leave policies, according to the managerial views, are available in TeleCom to assist an individual to reduce attendance at work to meet the needs of their personal lives. These include annual leave, sick, emergency, and other reasons - see table (14) below. Study leave, paternity leave for men, and for other reasons, which were found in many Western contexts (Doherty, 2004; Lewis and Campbell, 2008) were not available in the TeleCom.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study Two
1.	Paid Annual Vacation	Leave	Yes
2.	Paid Breast Feeding Leave	Leave	Yes
3.	Unpaid Parental Leave for Women	Leave	Yes
4.	Paid Maternity Leave	Leave	Yes
5.	Paid Sick Leave	Leave	Yes
6.	Bereavement Leave	Leave	Yes
7.	Honeymoon Leave	Leave	Yes
8.	Paid Emergency Leave	Leave	Yes
9.	Paid Study Leave	Leave	No
10.	Paternity Leave for Men	Leave	No
11.	Elder care Leave	Leave	No
12.	Leave for illness of child	Leave	No

Table 14: Leave WLB Policies of the TeleCom

The table reflects the fact that first six leave policies are part of the Palestinian Labour Law. For example, individuals have a right to at least 28 days annual holiday, 15 days sick leave a year, and one hour per day breast feeding for two years (see the Labour Law, 2002). HR managers observed:

Leave WLB practices, like other organisational policies, are adopted formally in the organisation and used by the entire workforce. Individuals are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the organisation ... a large number of them are built upon the Labour Laws of Palestine. (HR Managers).

Most of the Leave entitlements are set out in a handbook given to each individual who joins the TeleCom. For example access to Emergency Leave requires a form to be filled in and signed both by the line manager and the HR manager. In addition to the non-availability of many leave policies as showed in table (14) above, the existing leave period such as for maternity, is very short, 70 days, in comparison with that in many Western countries (Lewis and Campbell, 2008). This disparity emerged from the limited interest of the Palestinian government in increasing women in workforces, compared with many Western countries.

In 2005, the Labour Law in Palestine showed some improvement concerning women workforces in terms of adoption of one-year parental leave for them. This could be a mark of change in the developing countries like Palestine concerning women's work (cf Wang et al., 2008; Kargwell, 2008). Nevertheless, this parental leave is still less well established in contrast with many Western countries due to the fact that it is applied as unpaid leave. Moreover, the parental leave is implemented in the TeleCom and in relation to the labour law to help women workforces only. It is not recognised for both of the genders, unlike many Western countries (Theïvenon, 2011; Den Dulk et al., 2012). This policy seems to be derived from the dominance of masculine gender culture in Palestinian society.

It is shameful to ask about such a practice [for a man] in order to help a wife, because such concerns are still seen as a female preserve. However, the demand for Paternity Leave has started to appear in number of organisations and it is possible to be adopted in future. (Manager 5).

Men, as discussed in Section 3 are still generally excluded from direct responsibilities for child care, because normatively the role of extended family culture still exists during the special occasions of birth time. Thus the availability of these policies for men in the workplace is very limited. In addition, study leave, care for elder leave, and leave for child illness, would only be granted in an emergency, or as part of annual leave as stated by a TeleCom manager:

You will not find any organisation offering some of these leave because your child is ill or you need to look after parents. This is yours or family responsibilities and normally depends on managers to decide on. (Manager 7).

These leave policies are still undeveloped due to the fact that the increase in women in the workforce is a rather recent development, and also because of there is still a marked level of extended family support available. This fulfils various needs, especially those of older people, because of the Islamic principles concerning elder care (Kamali, 2003; Lundblad, 2008). There are however, many leave policies which provide for quite long periods of absence, and these could be extended beyond what is available in the rules and regulations of the organisation.

As you know, most of us are used to manage and fulfill many needs in such as occasion...such as welcoming visitors, inviting people, prepare place for occasion and also to help your relative or friends in these occasions. (Manager 1).

The standard 10 hours emergency leave could be extended to days, and the bereavement or honeymoon leave policies could also be extended, to satisfy personal and social needs of individuals. Although those policies are available in many Western organisations (Theïvenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009), they are not so strongly developed in the organisations under review. The basis of these polices in some 'collectivistic' cultures reflects the inclusive and family-oriented nature of these cultures, in which Emergency Leave, and Bereavement Leave are extended to individuals to a lesser degree compared with Europe (cfAycan, 2000; Hofstede, 1998). Thus a number of managers observed, for example:

An employee needed to look after his father during treatment ... these needs are not determined by policy but are considered according to each case and each situation...(with) humanitarian values determining access to such practices. (Manager 3).

Having flexibility in leave and other WLB policies relates to human situations in the TeleCom; individuals might access long unpaid leave even if he or she has no formal right to such a benefit on the basis of these policies. Though these findings have been outlined previously by a number of Western studies (Dex and Scheib, 2001), this must be considered unique in defining the characteristics of Palestinian society, which has a system of strong family and social relationships and obligations between individuals.

The leave policies in the TeleCom are still evolving, and have not yet arrived at the formalized stage of most Western countries. The Palestinian model is a

result of a collectivistic culture, which has led to the development of some culturally influenced leave policies to be applied in the TeleCom.

6.3.3 The Financial WLB Policies in the TeleCom

The WLB policies imply not only the leave or flexible policies, but they also potentially include any policy designed to help individuals manage their personal lives (Hogarth et al., 2001). Therefore, the Health Insurance, Paid Leisure etc. become part of WLB because they contribute to assisting workers and their families in reducing stress and enhancing their individual life quality (Idiagbon - Oke and Oke, 2011) (see table 15 below).

No.	The Name of the Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study Two
1.	Paying for Childcare Centre	Childcare	Yes
2.	Health Insurance System	Finance	Yes
3.	Sport and Beach Clubs	Finance	Yes
4.	Free landline and mobile phone	Finance	Yes
5.	Financial hardship support	Finance	Yes
6.	Refurbishment and Housing support	Financial	Yes

Table 15: Childcare and Financial WLB Policies of the TeleCom

Some scholars (egIdiagbon-Oke and Oke, 2011) have termed these as fringe benefits, secondary to organisational policy. However, in the Palestinian context of a collectivist culture which is under frequent pressures because of ongoing, externally generated violence, these are by no means “fringe” benefits, but are central to individual welfare. In TeleCom the situation is different because the TeleCom offers the financial policies for all workforces and their families; and the WLB is not applied according to individual performance or achievement, as illustrated in the following quotation:

We see WLB in the terms of policies that are assisting individuals financially so they can better manage their family responsibilities...we offer in this respect for all individuals many policies like covering cost of health insurance, and some leisure activities. (Manager 7, and 3).

Once an individual has received a permanent contract in the organisation, they are entitled to access to all Financial WLB policies according to specified

criteria. For example in cases where an employee requires access to leisure activities, he/she can do so by presenting the company ID and paying half the normal charge, and the company pays the remaining charge. Individuals and their families have also full health insurance coverage for treatment in local facilities and in some cases abroad. The financial WLB policies are vital issues in the organisation due to weak welfare system in Palestine, as a manager stated:

Financial policies are one of the main concerns of employees because the welfare system is very weak in Palestine; most go to the private sector to acquire such a service. Because of this, and interest of the organisation in promoting positive behaviour in the employees, the organisation has chosen to adopt the financial policies. (Manager 2).

The financial policies are crucial in the TeleCom due to the facts of lack of public provision in health and governmental support, which is not typically the situation in many Western countries (Theïvenon, 2011). Individuals in Palestine find good healthcare services extremely expensive (MAS, 2009).

There are many other financial benefits provided to individuals if they encountering some difficult financial situation, or having some responsibilities they are not capable of managing: *“Many employees have lost their houses in the War 2008, and the organisation helped intensively in this respect.”* (Manager 5). These kind of financial supports were normally applied to the entire workforce in the case of crises and financial difficulties. In addition to the humanitarian principles which were explored above, the current organisation has a social responsibility towards society by applying some supports for employees.

To sum up, it is clear that the current case studies have identified new WLB policies in terms of financial supports that have not been clearly identified before in the literature. These policies were developed mainly to fulfil the basic needs of individuals, who are not supported by the social welfare system in Palestine.

6.3.4. The Child Care WLB Policies in the TeleCom

The literature reviewed mentioned the existence of childcare policies in most Western companies (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Glass and Finley, 2002). Regarding the TeleCom there is a childcare centre for the workforce for children up to the age of 6 years. The children are entitled to education, and food at a discount of at least 50%. Individuals who are not able to access the main Childcare Centre as a result of the distance of their homes can receive 50% of the cost of Childcare in other centres.

The entire workforce has a right to register their children in the organisation's childcare centre. ... It is a very good practice because the facilities are excellent and the cost is low... It solves many problems for many workforces in finding a good place for their kids. (Manager 8).

Historically, a childcare policy in Palestine, in contrast with many Western countries, was not established due to the availability of extended family support which would normally taken care of children. Recently for various reasons there has been a decrease of dependence on the extended family for support; in consequence the numbers of users of such a facility are estimated to increase at above 20-25% of the company workforce wishing to use this facility.

Before most of the working employees depended on the extended family - grand mum or dad or cousin to take care of their children but nowadays only few families have this option...couples today need childcare for their children. (Managers 1 and 3).

It seems clear that the changes beginning to occur in Palestinian culture and social structure for various reasons have been associated with vital social changes in terms of declining dependency by families on support from their extended family members, which directly affects the greater need for child care policies.

6.3.5. Social and Religious WLB Practices

The meaning of WLB practices is not tied to a specific range of policies; the range of the policies under the heading of WLB may change according to the prevailing social and culture characteristics of a society (Hogarth et al., 2001; Den Dulk et al., 2012; De Henau et al., 2007). It could be argued that Social and Religious WLB Practices include different areas such as the prayer-time break, Hajj vacation, personal visitors etc (see table 16 below) - all these constitute

part of WLB policies that assist individuals to balance their working lives with their social and religious needs.

No.	The Name of Policies	Type of Policy	Available Policy in Case Study Two
1.	Personal Phone Call	Social	YES
2.	Personal Visitor at Work	Social	YES
3.	Prayer-time Breaks	Religious	YES
4.	Reduced Working Hours in Ramadan	Religious	YES
5.	Paid Hajj Vacation	Religious	YES
6.	Ummrah Vacation	Religious	YES

Table 16: Social and Religious WLB Policies of the TeleCom

Muslims are required to pray five times a day, for up to half an hour on each occasion, and a number of these obligations to pray occur during normal working hours; the same conditions apply to the Hajj pilgrimage when individuals are supposed to travel to Mecca for one month at least once during their lifetime (Kamali, 2003; Kamal-ud-Din, 2010). Because these practices are compulsory for all Muslims and constitute a part of the five basic principles of Islam, all organisations are obliged to provide individuals with time to fulfil these religious observances.

Most employees in Palestinian business have a right to these religion practices; they have time to pray and take a holiday for Hajj ... the only difference between organisations is whether these practices apply formally or informally. (Manager 2).

Religious practices are universal, and access to them is available across most organisations in Palestine. In comparison with other organisations, these Religious WLB practices are present in a formalised manner in the TeleCom. The policies are prescribed in the codebook of the TeleCom policies so as not to be misused. Therefore, an amount of one month's paid leave for Hajj, a 2-hour reduction in the normal working day during the fasting period of Ramadan, and half an hour a day for praying should be part of work-life programmes in a Muslim country such as Palestine, whereas in other organisations, employees have similar rights but these are not formally enshrined in any coded criteria,

and most are simply based upon 'common sense' toleration in a well-functioning organisation.

Furthermore, Muslims believe that any organisation offering such religious policies will increase its profile as an ethical business. In addition, such policies gain respect for the management from employees and society as well, for what is called *Baraka* which is a term referring to faith-based belief of Muslim people, that obeying Almighty God increases efficiency and effectiveness of individuals and organisations, especially if they are helping and supporting people to practise their religion. By doing so, the *Baraka* organisation will be blessed by God (Kamali, 2003; Lundblad, 2008). Given this, and in parallel with the religious policies regarding the Five Islamic rules, we regarded the accommodation of these religious practices as important, and indeed as a major part in work-life policies.

Regarding the social policies mentioned in the table (16) above, these include two additional policies: Personal Phone Calls and Personal Visitors at the workplace. These two social WLB policies were found in the TeleCom to enable employees to affect a balance between working and personal life (Hogarth et al., 2001). For example, women may use their company phone to ask about their children at home, and men might use company calls to ask for a favour from a friend. Considering these social purposes in the Palestinian society, the organisation has adopted the social WLB policies in the workplace as stated by Manager1 below:

Social WLB practices are normal in most organisations [simply] because this is the normal life style of people here ... it is usual to see people visit their friends and have a cup of tea or coffee at the workplace. (Manager 1).

These social WLB practices arise from the social traditions of the Palestinian society: these traditions are mainly characterised by a polychromatic culture (marked by intersecting, rather than discrete social institutions, customs and norms), which is contrasted with the monochromatic cultures found in most of Western countries (Obonyo and Dimba, 2007; Ayman, 2000). Thus, in Western countries, society has normally developed progressively towards a formal separation between work and private time and vice-versa, whereas the forms of

social contact engaged during working hours in Palestine would be considered as 'abnormal practice' in businesses in most of the Western countries (Hofstede, 1991). Like most of the other TeleCom policies, the social policies are applied under specific or formal rules and regulations.

There are series of regulations to control social WLB policies for example the telephone calls controlled through the central to receive or make any outside calls ... besides that there is log visitors book to control visiting period and time. (Manager 2).

The TeleCom established time schedules to indicate the reason for the visit, the name of the visitor, and their times of their arrival and departure. These rules were settled to avoid misuse of such practices and to minimize interference with the smooth running of the company and its overall operations. This might not be the case in many other organisations in Palestine due to the fact that the social policies are part of the society, and not part of the business agenda.

6.3.6 Summary of the Content of WLB Policies in TeleCom

In a Western context the WLB practices comprise mainly of Flexible Working Practices (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Fleetwood, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2003). This is not the case in the Palestine context. Here Flexible Working Practices are available only in the form of limited Part-time and flexitime working policies; other Flexible Working practices have not been adopted. In addition the leave policies in the TeleCom have not yet arrived to the stage which exists in number of Western countries (Den Dulk et al., 2005; Budd and Mumford, 2006). It is clear however that the Palestine culture has developed some specific kinds of flexible, and sometimes ad hoc, leave policies in contrast with those in many developed countries. Some of these leave policies fulfilled special social needs of individuals, such as long emergency leave, long bereavement and honeymoon policies. All these have vital importance in the Arab culture, in order for individuals to fulfil the cultural responsibilities of individuals.

There are also new practices emerging to fulfil individuals' financial, social and religious needs in Palestine society. These focus primarily on assisting the workforce financially – as well as emphasizing practices that are related to social and religious factors. Generally most of these practices were applied within the present organisation. In addition to the practices that are formally

applied within the organisation, to assist individual employees with a number of aspects of their daily lives, in the case of individuals requiring financial assistance the organisation may seek to help them in special or individually focussed ways. In the case of employees who have an urgent need for part-time working or unpaid leave, the organisation is often willing to grant this even if the individual concerned does not meet the organisation's formal requirements for such an entitlement. The extent to which this view holds true will be explored more fully in due course from the perspective of the employees interviewed.

6.4 Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices in the Organisation

This section will discuss the reasons for adopting WLB practices in the organisation. The perspective of the managers and the employees revealed six substantive factors that have led organisations to adopt WLB policies in the workplace. These factors are outlined in table 17 below.

Reasons for Adopting WLB Practices	Flexible WLB Practices		Leave WLB Practices		Childcare and Financial WLB		Social/Religious WLB Practices	
	Empl.	Manag	Empl.	Manag	Empl.	Manag	Empl.	Manag
Social and Religious Factors	-	-	-	-	-	-	Strong	Strong
Government Regulations	-	-	Strong	Strong	-	-	-	-
Women Workforce	Strong	Strong	-	-	Strong	Strong	-	-
Competition for Labour	Strong	Weak	-	-	Strong	Weak	-	-
International Networking	-	-	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	-	-
Labour Unions	-	-	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak

Table 17: The Main Reasons for Adopting WLB Policies in the TeleCom

This is an illustrative table, rather than one meant to emphasize a positivist relationship or a quantitative approach. Evaluating and understanding interviewee's perception may, however, help to understand the direct relationship between reasons for adoption of policies. These inferences draw on the "critical realist" conception of the research setting, rather than on any statistical analysis or quantitative approach. 'Strong' in the above table means

that the majority of managers and employees agreed on the postulated relationship. 'Weak' means, that a small number of managers or employees agreed on the relationship. The '-' is used when there were no participants mentioning the relationship.

6.4.1 The Social and Religious Factor of Palestine

The Social WLB policies appeared, as discussed in section 1, as a result of prevailing cultural norms, and patterns of individual or group ethics in Palestinian society. For example there exists a "polychromatic" society, in which the culture and the individual have little separation between work time and personal life (Lu et al., 2010; Hofstede, 1991). This is reflected in the fact that certain social policies or practices become embedded in the TeleCom policies, as stated for example by Manager 1 below:

We have some Social WLB practices developed over time by the TeleCom (and) these normal patterns of behaviour of individual in society as a whole reflect the culture ... I mean that some of these policies have not resulted from the TeleCom initiative; they are mainly developed to cope with the patterns of individual in the society.

It is apparent that traditional cultural patterns of the Palestinian society are indeed "polychromatic", which has direct impact upon the existence of some of the social WLB policies in the TeleCom. These policies differ from organisations in the developed countries in which patterns of behaviour are generally split between working and personal time. The situation is quite different in developing countries such as Palestine as most of the people, including top management could, for example, have personal visitors during working hours. Moreover, Islamic culture has some direct impact on the existence of some of the WLB policies which cannot be found in the West:

It is obvious that there is direct religious effect on the adoption of some of the WLB practices. For example the organisation has no choice but to adopt prayer time because they correlate with the five principles of Islam... (Manager 6).

The organisation thus has little choice but to adopt time for religious practices, for every Muslim to engage in daily religious observances (see Kamali, 2003; Kamal-ud-Din, 2010, for details of such observance). For example in Saudi Arabia, it is obligatory on most business to stop work during Salah (prayer) time; and the working hours normally reduce in the fasting time of Ramadan. The

existence of Islamic practices in the organisation is also influential in terms of trust and honesty within and between the nations business organisations.

The adoption of the Islamic policies is interrelated with increased trust and honesty of the people in the organisation and it is ... contribution in building a mosque which increases individuals respect for it. (Employee 14, Manager 8).

Offering religious policies by the TeleCom is correlated with reputation of the organisation in respect of religious belief, and norms of the individual workers and managers. This issue is very important in the Islamic society of Palestine. Organisations have built a good reputation which aims to increase trust and honesty of organisation in the marketplace.

To sum up, some unique cultural and religious habits of Palestinians play a strong role in the existence of WLB policies. These cultural factors underlying adoption of some WLB policies in the organisation, is an important, if expected, finding of this study.

6.4.2 The Rules and the Regulations of Government

The Labour Law of Palestine has enacted certain Rules and Regulation concerning WLB policies. These government regulations have impact upon the adoption of some WLB policies in the TeleCom, such as annual holidays, emergency leave, and the right of women to breast-feed at work (see Labour Law of Palestine, 2002).

Leave policies and job contracts are formulated based upon regulations made by the government. It is considered the criteria that are used to reserve rights of organisations and employees. If any change occurred in the Palestinian Labour Law, it will be considered in organisational policies. (Manager 3).

The Labour Law determines the number of working hours: "*We cannot enforce employee to work 50 hours since the working hours in labour law is 40 hours only.*" (Manager 8). It also pertained when the organisation moved from earlier Jordanian Labour Law to the Palestinian Law in 2002 (see section 2.6), and the TeleCom policies have further introduced changes in terms of increases in number of annual holidays, the introduction of maternity leave and other policies. Additionally, there were a number of changes in the Labour Law of Palestine in 2005 which have impacted on organisational policies (ETF, 2014;

Daoud et al., 2010). The TeleCom is thus following the example of other organisations in many Western countries in terms of the adoption of government regulation and rules concerning WLB policies. Study participants observed:

We have investors nationally and internationally and also a strong relationship with government...these factors, alongside the interests of the organisation for their own self-satisfaction, oblige the organisation to respect the Labour Law... otherwise, we might be in danger of losing our reputation in the market. (Employee 5, Manager 5).

The TeleCom needs to ensure that their actions are in accordance with prevailing regulations if they are to avoid damaging publicity. This particular organisation is not a small one working outside the sightline of the government; on the contrary, in all its business activities, the company has a close relationship with government. These factors alone are sufficient to ensure that the eyes of the government are focussed on the TeleCom; this is consistent with other findings in many Western contexts (Poelmans et al., 2003b; Wood et al., 2003). The impact of the government rules upon the organisational HR policies is manifestly a public relations exercise, but may also reflect the true values of the organisation.

The regulations of Government are like propaganda or image that exists in a logbook of the company; it is not practices in the ground. There are number of leave policies that exist in the labour Law, but which are not recognised by workforces. (Employee 13).

This point of view will be discussed in Section 3, in terms of whether workforces have an access to WLB policies. Findings indicate that as policies, the Labour Law does have an impact on the adoption of WLB policies in the organisation. This finding is unexpected in the current context of Palestine because in general the effectiveness of governmental rules and regulations is often attenuated.

The rules and regulations of Labour Law are thus one factor influencing the adoption of WLB policies in the organisation, and this is mainly in respect of the Leave arrangement WLB policies.

6.4.3 The Existence of the Labour Unions in the TeleCom

There are different perceptions from the interviews over the relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and the existence of Labour Unions in the TeleCom. The standpoint of managers is more consistent with the recent studies in developed countries which emphasise that the labour union has little impact on the adoption of WLB policies in organisations (De Menezes et al., 2009; Prowse and Prowse, 2006). Managers in the present study were of the opinion that the impact of labour unions is limited and occurred only in the area of enriching social life activities of individuals. Regarding individual benefit whether in terms of WLB policies or any other policies, the contribution of any labour union was said to be limited.

Management drives individual benefit from an employee relationship viewpoint...the labour union is allowed to present its views and demands but we as a management see whether it benefits for organisation and workforces. (Manager 1).

The available WLB policies are not related to the existence of labour unions. Most of Leave policies for example, were adopted in first days of the organisation. However, I cannot ignore their role in increasing an awareness of the management's desire to improve participation in these policies. We work together to boost individual life. (Manager 3).

This is a "diplomatic" answer, attempting to rationalise the role of Labour Unions, and to diminish the voice of individual; the choice of Leave Arrangements, with its lack of any overt relationship to the Labour Union, was a convenient means of seeking to demonstrate a general point from a particular instance, namely, that the Labour Union has little or no influence on the policies of management. On the other hand, employees drew a different picture as suggested below:

The labour union has had impact on, the adoption of Financial WLB practices, [including] Childcare...This occurred after the strike by employees and actions arranged by labour union to sort out these rights, and to resolve other matters related to employment contract. (Employee 1).

Employees strongly affirmed the role played by the Labour Union in adopting forms of paid WLB policies within the TeleCom; these policies were adopted less as a consequence of an evident desire for co-operation on the part of the management, and more as a consequence of strikes and other strong voices and industrial actions led by the Labour Union. What some employees said

about the reasons for the strike was written up in the local newspaper (*AlQuds News Paper*). The strike led to negotiations between the organisation's management and the labour union over what benefit would be available and what was to be included in the contract of employment. They obliged the TeleCom to provide a permanent contract for its employees, one that included reference to a number of Leave and Financial WLB benefits. Numbers of employees observed, for example:

After new election of Labour union and co-operation with other outside Labour unions, the right for individual for further benefit increase and discrimination between workforces has detached. (Employee 13).

The role of the Labour union has increased over time in engagement in the management process of the organisation; this is consistent with the recent studies in number of Arab country (El Said and McDonald, 2002) in which there is a development in structure and strength of labour union as a result of economic improvements, and governmental support of such a style of business life. This observation has not been identified explicitly or implicitly by perceptions of managers interviewed: that is, the managers minimised or neglected this role of labour unions and their impact on the ground floor of the workplace.

To sum up, the existence of a Labour Union has played a role in developing the policies of the TeleCom, but only in the perceptions of the employees and not in those of the managers interviewed. This disparity derived from several cultural factors, which will be discussed later (see section 7.3.4 and 7.3.5).

6.4.4 International Experience and Network Collaboration Agreements

A new theme has emerged from the present data, one which may explain the main reasons for adopting WLB practices by the TeleCom. This is the existence of International Collaboration and Networking Agreements, between the TeleCom in Palestine and internationally. Whether the respondents were managers or employees, they all emphasised the impact of international advisers, programmes for the exchange of knowledge, and their own international experience as factors influencing the development of WLB policies in their own organisation.

I agree with your conclusion in regards to the change of our CEO. A number of top managers made changes in the organisation's policies, particularly as a result of bringing with them their international experience ... this is apparent in their intention to adopt Paternity Leave in the organisation very soon. (Managers 4 and 6).

When the TeleCom senior management changed their CEO from one who had work experience in an Arab country to one who had experience in the USA, both the systems and the policies of the TeleCom underwent a number of changes. These changes did not merely involve reorganising the working structure but also extended as far as the introduction of Part-Time Working. In other words, this experience, combined with a desire on the part of the TeleCom to work according to international standards, fostered the adoption of a wider range of WLB policies within the workplace. On this, a manager commented:

The relationship with international organisation needs levels of standards to enable us to interact and communicate with them. Without this level of capability, such as the management system, the organisation would remain outside of the collaboration. (Manager 3).

The TeleCom policies are changing in order to fit with cultural factors in Palestine; the TeleCom is obliged to satisfy prevailing standards to a level that is acceptable to its partner companies and so be able to work in a way which is conformable to the demands of their collaborative partner. Many employees added that every year there is an international consultation, such as H-GROUP Consultancy Company (Employee2). The H-GROUP Company evaluates and may restructure the organisation's policies. It gives advice on how to develop work and department of HRM such as, "H-GROUP recommendation was improving system of promotion and childcare services" (most of participants).

As a number of participants added:

Every year, many workers and members of our management team visit international organisations and vice versa; they do so to learn about the latest developments in different fields ... from this experience and [as a consequence of] the knowledge they have gained, the organisation has become motivated to work according to international standards and [prevailing] policies. (Manager 3).

The co-operation with local cultural values and knowledge has been brought into the present organisation. The organisation has also utilised foreign expertise in managing and developing its workplace; such foreign experts were

responsible for recommending the adoption of Paternity Leave for men which did not apply till recently in the organisation.

This section thus argues that innovation in the area of WLB is to a significant degree externally driven so far as Palestine is concerned. This is a new finding on the reasons why WLB practices are adopted by the TeleCom in the Arab world.

6.4.5 The Role of Competition and of Shortages in the Labour Supply

The relationship between the adoption of WLB practices and competition in the market place was contrasted in the interviews from opposing standpoints. According to most of the managers' views, there is no relationship between competition for labour and the emergence of WLB practices. They evolved, in this view, as a result of the TeleCom initiatives and concern about individuals.

Benefits of WLB policies are a result of organisational initiative, governmental regulations and to enhance individual benefit and their lives. (Manger 3).

Managers are less open to the view that competition for skilled personnel, or retaining workforce were reasons behind the existence of WLB policies in the workplace. This is in line with number of studies in Western countries (CIPD, 2009; Wood et al., 2003; Osterman, 1995). There were however, a few managers who provided a contrary view to the proceeding comments:

The Childcare policy was adopted as a result of competition and with the intention of keeping staff in the organisation, but this is in parallel with the benefit of such policies and the demand for them from women in the workforce... (Manager 1).

The TeleCom is working in an open marketplace containing a number of competitors. It is competing for the same limited pool of highly skilled workers. Palestine has recently been the focus of increasing attention from several international organisations that were intending to open businesses there. One of these was a Turkish commercial bank. In light of these changes, the TeleCom may logically wish to make changes to their prevailing policies provided that such changes are compatible with the organisation's overall strategy (cf the Western findings of Dex and Smith, 2002; Coughlan, 2000). This standpoint is also underlined by most of the employees who stated for example, that:

The Part-Time Working practice was applied as a consequence of a desire not to lose professional workers to other organisations and especially the women workforce ... at present, there are new companies entering the marketplace and increased intention for some people to move on. (Employee 9).

The adoption of WLB practices clearly relates, in part at least, to existence of competitors in the market place; the organisation does not wish to be in the position of having to recruit new staff, an operation that would be costly; the organisation hence increases benefit for workforces such as flexible leave and financial policies (a process described in Western studies – see De Menezes et al., 2009; Dex and Smith, 2002). Numbers of employees added, for example:

Because women are more motivated to work in more educationally demanding jobs, and in limited working time organisations, and because we need those workforces the organisation found it is necessary to offer such policies... Generally, this is a normal societal cultural aspiration in the context of Palestine. (Employees 1 and 3).

Notwithstanding the fact that the high percentage of unemployment in Palestine, which had reached 39% among both genders (PARC 2012), the organisation still considers the flexible policies necessary in order to satisfy the needs of the female workforce. This might, in the opinion of some informants, be due to fact that the current organisation is a well-established one; thus it wants to reflect some move towards women's empowerment to satisfy its need for a highly skilled workforce. Part time policies would be acceptable because of the Palestinian culture which supports women in working in environments with limited work hours.

It is therefore, possible to conclude that competition in the labour market is one factor obliging the TeleCom to adopt WLB practices, and this view is more accepted by the employees than by managers. The contradictory positions in this regard may be due to some cultural reasons, which will be discussed in see section (7.3.4 and 7.3.5).

6.4.6 The Existence of Women Workforces in the Organisation

Many developed countries (Dex and Smith, 2002), have found a relationship between the existence of women in the workforce and the adoption of WLB policies, while there are other scholars who have not found this relationship

(Poelmans et al., 2003). In the current case study, the majority of managers insisted that an increase in the number of women in the workforce led directly to an increase in the pressure to adopt WLB practices. This was chiefly related to the provision of Childcare facilities.

This [change] correlated with an increasing number of requests [for WLB policies] and reports that the women were encountering problems managing both their children and housekeeping responsible; the organisation understood this and appreciated that these need were real. (Manager 3).

At the inception of the business start-up these policies did not exist because the majority of the workforce were younger males with dependent families. Over the time this has changed, with more women who are in regular employment with the company, having young children; this factor along with others such as changes of the status or position of women in the workforce, and the skill and experience they have, could have led the TeleCom to institute many WLB policies to respond to women's needs.

Women were behind the inception of childcare ... Yes... it was an increase in the number of married women that was behind the adoption of childcare practices... It is also [because] we have strong position and skill in workplace and labour union used to help and support us as women. (Employees 7 and 6).

Considering the increasing number of women in the workforce, which is now more than 25%, and also the high skill levels they have, they have been able to persuade the organisation to institute such policies to fulfil their needs. The labour union, which includes one women member, has also contributed in this matter to increase power of women workforce in the organisation.

It could be added here that Arab women, whether single or married, are considered to be chiefly responsible for their children and for housekeeping (Obermeyer, 1992; Metcalfe, 2007). Given this cultural phenomenon, combined with women's growing interest in entering a workplace that offers fewer working hours, the organisation would certainly consider the importance of women to be one reason for adopting WLB policies. Otherwise, as mentioned above, the increasingly skilled women workforce could be motivated to quit salaried work.

To sum up, the existence of a female workforce, and their positions and skill they have has certainly contributed in the adoption of WLB policies in the organisation.

6.4.7 Summary of the Reasons of Adopting WLB Policies

The cultural factors embedded in the Islamic faith, and individual social relationships are areas which, in particular have motivated or obliged the organisation to introduce social and religious WLB policies. Also networking and international co-operation with foreign companies has been responsible for what may be termed the 'importation' of certain WLB practices. Neither of these factors has previously been underlined by any study of organisational development or policy. The impact of women in the workforce has previously been outlined (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004) but this must be considered within the context of the organisation under study. As a Telecommunication company, the organisation studied here works in a sector that has a high level of need for recruiting appropriately skilled professional women as well as professional men. This is consistent with studies in developed countries (Dex and smith, 2002).

The employment regulations of government have also boosted the adoption of WLB practices in the organisation. This finding contests earlier suppositions, because the power of the government is generally weak and less developed in Arab countries. Because the organisation is large and has a relationship with government and public shareholders, the rules of the government have become a matter of concern for the company. Competition was deemed to influence the adoption of WLB within the organisation, but more so from the perspective of the employees than that of the employers. This was also the case in respect of the role of labour unions. There was a contradiction in respect of opinions on the influence of labour unions among the participants, primarily reflected in the division between the managers, and employees who were members of the union. This kind of finding is explicable in terms of some cultural factors; this question is explored further in more detail in Chapter 7.

6.5 The Role and Behaviour of Line Managers

This section scrutinises the take-up of WLB practices by employees. It outlines data that reflects the behaviour of line managers, and assesses their impact upon employees' perception and use of WLB practices in the TeleCom.

A number of themes found in the data have underlined the importance of line managers in determining uses of WLB practices on the part of employees. It is found that without the knowledge and the awareness of the line managers of the WLB practices of the TeleCom, the benefit of WLB practices was not generally recognised by employees, as illustrated in this interview:

We have a good WLB practices, but [the organisation] does not publish them, and this is even so for the Line Manager ... Someone wanted paternity leave, and Line Manager laughed and says that is funny ... This was because the Line Manager believed this practice to be unavailable in the organisation. (Employees 3 and 5).

A large number of participants underlined this viewpoint, and they remarked on the limited awareness of their Line Managers about the policy of the TeleCom and the process of accessing WLB practices. This is consistent with those in many Western countries (Bond and Wise, 2003; Hyman and Summers, 2004; Thompson and Prottas, 2005). Those researchers argue that for organisations to gain full advantage of WLB practices, Line Managers need to have a proper training and communication programs, in the workplace which is not typically found in the TeleCom as stated below:

The communication process in the organisation depends mainly upon the organisational Handbook which each individual has a copy of, in order to understand policies and procedures of the organisation... the email is used to inform us about any new policies, but this is very limited... (Employee 9).

The TeleCom's handbook cannot cover the procedure of any new policies such as the Part-Time working or parental leave practices; the last handbook edition was around 10 years old. The E-mail technology is not used appropriately in the TeleCom: for example, it was rarely used to inform individuals about any new benefit adopted in the TeleCom. Bond and Wise (2003) reported that existence of training programs in organisations positively influenced practice, through increasing the awareness level of line managers of the WLB policies. Employees in this regard, stated that the TeleCom offers line managers and

other individuals, training programmes, but on a very limited scale.

We used to have a training programme, but only at the first few days of our work. After that, the training program is very limited and might not be the case for our line manager... [we need] training program to teach us or inform us about any changes or new benefit of the organisation has not occurred. (Employee 7).

There is no effective training system in the TeleCom to boost the use of WLB practices by line managers and individuals as seen below in sections (6.6.1 and 6.6.2). Ideally, the TeleCom needs to have a continuous training system to get the benefit of WLB practices. This is especially important when one considers one cultural aspect of an Arab nation: the line managers usually neglect any program or any policies that may reduce their power and increase freedom for an individual (Jamal, 2009; Aycan, 2000). Behaviour of line managers is also influenced by political and religious beliefs in Palestine. The line managers are, apparently, more friendly with employees who have the same cultural or political background:

If you belong or support Fateh group and your supervisors is Hammas, you may encounter trouble, and many benefits might not be available such as leave policies...This is because I am Kafer in their view and I should be treated badly...[this could reflect] negatively upon your career development. (Employees 15 and 8).

This standpoint was expressed strongly by many participants. Beliefs of individuals such as being a strong Islamic believer or belonging to one of the Palestinian political parties may influence the behaviour of line managers. There are two other factors that are applied as criteria by line managers to give individual access to WLB practices. One of them is individual performance.

It is not common for ordinary employees to have access to study leave ... because our manager gives these rights to persons who are believed to be highly skilled, have long work experience, or more productivity. (Employee 14).

Some WLB policies are available only to specific groups of people that wish to acquire or improve skills in high demand by the organisations, and for those who have worked a long time in the organisation; this is consistent with earlier studies in a number of Western countries (Thomas and Ely, 1996; Whittock et al., 2002). The gender of the individual was also another criteria utilised by line managers to allow individual requests under WLB policies.

The women also have priorities in this regard “uses of WLB practices” and they could access leave policies easier than us men. (Employee 5).

In line with many studies in Western countries, line managers give preference to WLB requests for women in the workforce rather than for men (Barham et al., 1998). This behaviour of line managers is reinforced by the existing strongly segregated gender culture in Palestine. These policies were not department-specific: for example, in the marketing department and in public relations, employees pointed to the limited use of WLB policies as a result of negative line manager behaviour in favour of females.

The Line Manager is not giving the right to have leave, part-time working, or access a phone for urgent needs, I am sometimes frightened to use my leave that is allowable because this will reflect negatively on my annual evaluation...The supervisor's words were: 'you know that it is probably not a very good idea for you to take 2 weeks leave. (Employee 5).

A wide perception among employees in the different TeleCom departments was that Line Managers were less cooperative, and they threatened individual promotion and career development in the organisation, in the case of individuals taking up “excessive” WLB allowances. This is the usual leadership style in Palestine, which prefers distance from employees as part of the power culture (As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006). Many employees added that line managers in the TeleCom are less trustful of employees and generally operate under a traditional management style. Indeed, this management style seemed to apply to the sole female line manager:

She [line manager] is a rigid person and hard-worker...if you take up the leave policies or be absent from work, you will be in terrible trouble and she [line manager] may write a bad report about you to the top management. (Employee 9).

The behaviour of women line managers does not differ from their male counterparts according to a number of studies in Western countries (Thomas and Ganster, 1995; Allen, 2001). Women in the role of line managers seem to be trying to work within the normative culture of the “male gender pattern”, and for their own advancement or survival, and behave as much like male managers as possible. In the present study however, there were a few employees who described the availability of other types of cooperative and helpful line managers:

Our manager is really a supportive person; in the case of any personal situation, he is understanding and allows me leave if I require it. ... We are not like other departments, where some individuals are frightened to use their allowable practices because this will affect their annual evaluation. (Employee 2).

This is the perception of a few individuals in the TeleCom; this reflects a transformational leadership style (cf Wang and Walumbwa, 2007) which encourages individuals to make use of WLB practices, assisting individuals to manage their personal lives. This kind of behaviour was apparent among some of the line managers in the IT department who were liberal, open minded, and who had degrees from Western countries. These line managers could believe more in the modern management system than did other managers. But this transformational leadership is unusual in the Arab context because individuals usually prefer “high power” distances between themselves and their employees, so giving flexibility to individual aspirations would be uncommon (As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006). In the present study it was also found that line Managers were inclined to give preference to older people in use of WLB practices.

This is not just in respect of women, line managers also differentiate between older employees with long experience and younger employees. For example, it is rare to see the line manager reject leave practice for employee X but it might happen to us. ... Employee X is 50 years old and has more than 10 years work experience in the organisation. (Employee 6).

Giving preference to older workers rather than younger ones in access to WLB practices can only be “rationally” justified if the years of experience amassed by older workers are deemed to be of value to Line Managers. Discrimination of line managers in giving rights for women or for older people is only atypically cited as a problem in Western contexts (Barham et al., 1998; Woodhams and Lupton, 2006). In contrast, some social and Islamic values do accept preferences for older people (Aycon et al., 2000).

The mismanagement process of WLB practices by line managers can lead to feelings of discrimination amongst individuals. In line with some Western studies, many individuals did not seem to be able to access certain WLB policies. Some individuals in addition encountered problems of nepotism in the behaviour of line managers regarding use of WLB practices in the TeleCom:

It is not a question about women; it is more that women are nice and work closely with managers. ... Everything in this department depends on your relation with the [line] manager and which family you come from. ... If you are from family X you will have what you want ... if you give information to your [line] manager you will be fine and in a safe position. (Employee 9).

The take-up of WLB practices is not generally determined according to humanitarian considerations, as stated in section above (6.3.1 and 6.3.2), nor does such access follow necessarily from a concern for the greater family pressures placed on women. Rather preference would appear to depend on the level of the personal relationship between the Line Manager and the employee. The term *Wasta*, or the existence of personal preferences, is a strong theme in Arab countries (Neal et al., 2005; Loewe et al., 2007). *Wasta* is an informal system of nepotistic relationships between employees and the top management; thus it is less likely for employees to have access to WLB working practices in the absence of the requisite level of personal contact or connections.

Some of the research findings identify the effect of the line manager's behaviour in the organisation. Positive behaviour in the transformation leadership model can enhance and improve the individual's attitude and behaviour of workers in the organisation strongly: *"Of course my ambition to work more and achieve more were enhanced by this manager's behaviour; [I began] ...working hard and harder."*(Employee 1).

This is sometimes the case in Western countries (Purcell and Hutchinson; 2007). However, the positive impact of an individual line manager in the TeleCom could be greater than those in Western countries.

The authoritarian management style is according to interviewees, the tradition of Arab societies, and the normal system of the line manager in most of Arab companies. This management style also incorporates a system of discrimination in terms of the *Wasta* principle: *"This is our normal life."*(Employees 10 and 16). In other words, the employees are less susceptible (in negative terms) to such behaviour due to its cultural roots in Palestinian society. Hence the "inappropriate" behaviour of line managers did not have a strongly negative

impact upon most employees in the TeleCom.

6.5.1 Summary of the Role and Behaviour of Line Manager

Limited awareness by line managers of available or relevant procedures in this, and in previous research, is one of the factors that reduces the level of employees' use of many WLB practices (Ryan and Kossek, 2008; Bond and Wise, 2003; Thompson and Prottas, 2006). There is often a lack of clear or rational communication across the organization in the present case study. Some behaviours of line managers were found to give women and old people priority in use of WLB, rather than other groups. This was not typically found in recent studies in Western countries, because there are somewhat more equal gender patterns in society (O'Brien et al., 2007; Winslow, 2005). In addition to age factors, line managers utilized the religious and political belief factors as criteria for giving personnel WLB privileges. This pattern of management has not been systematically described in previous research.

This section identifies an interesting line manager behaviour in uses of WLB practices, the principle of *Wasta*; such a factor of 'favouritism' shown to certain ideological groups, is typically found in less developed countries such as China and in Arab countries (Neal et al., 2005; Loewe et al., 2007). The findings also identify the common leadership style in the TeleCom which is that of "transactional leadership", which does not give the employee the right to cooperate and negotiate individual roles and rights. There are also some levels of transformational leadership in the organisation, but these developments are still at an early stage. It was found that transformational leadership existed more often among individuals in marketing and public relation departments, and also among younger people rather than in those in administrative and finance departments.

6.6 The Access and Take-Up of WLB Policies in the TeleCom

The above section has identified the obstacles to line managers offering (or responding favourably to requests) WLB practices by employees. The following section will outline additional barriers deterring individuals from using WLB practices in the TeleCom. The barrier to the use of flexible and leave WLB

practices will be discussed first, then the financial and childcare practices, and finally the social and religious WLB practices. In each of these sub-sections, there is table which indicates the number of employees who do or do not take up the WLB practices.

6.6.1 Employee Take-Up of the Flexible and the Leave WLB Practices

Flexible and Leave WLB Practices	No of users of practices		No of non-users of practices	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Teleworking	0	0	7	9
Flexitime Working	1	2	6	7
Part-time Working	1	3	6	6
One hour reduction for women	-	5	7	4
Paid Annual Vacation	5	8	2	1
Paid Breast Feeding Leave	-	9	-	0
Paid Maternity Leave	-	9	-	0
Paid Sick Leave	7	9	0	0
Unpaid Parental Leave for women	-	3	-	6
Bereavement Leave	4	5	3	4
Honeymoon Leave	4	4	3	5
Paid Emergency Leave	6	9	1	0
Paternity Leave for Men	-	-	-	-
Paid Study Leave	-	-	-	-

Table 18: Take Up of Flexible and Leave WLB Practices in the TeleCom

One male and three female employees made use of part-time working; one male and two female utilised the flexitime option. These data point to the fact that the take up of flexible WLB practices is not common amongst individuals in the TeleCom. In this respect, several employees reported, for example that: *“What are these practices? [Flexitime and parental leave]...we have not heard about them”* (Employee 9). This limited awareness of WLB practices reduces uses of WLB practices in the TeleCom; this is in line with many studies in Western countries (Dex and Smith, 2002; Budd and Mumford, 2006). There are others who had not been able to use part-time, emergency, sick, and other leave practices as a result of the management discretion behaviour of Line Manager (see section 6.5). Several employees moreover were unable to use

WLB practices due to the fact they were fringe benefits for only a minority of employees.

Flexible practices are more likely to be reserved for those in highly skilled jobs and for the organisation's principal staff...they give them this right to feel more freedom and so been able to continue working in workplace. (Employee 7).

Flexible practices are available to specific individuals in whom the TeleCom has invested time and money, and those are mainly the highly skilled people; this is not usually the case in many Western contexts (Budd and Mumford, 2001; Gray and Tudball, 2003). Employees also reported that one of the criteria for individuals using the flexible policies is whether the person is male or female

It is more for women, and those individuals in very difficult situation; it is not commonly applied to all individuals in the organisation. This is the belief and behaviour of line managers as well as the HR department which sets this rule for the women in agenda policies. (Employee13).

Females are more able to have flexible policies than male; this differs from findings in many recent studies in Western contexts in which both of the genders can now access WLB practices (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Crompton et al., 2005). Nepotism criteria exercised by top management, HR managers or Line managers (see section 6.5) also distorted the use of WLB practices in the present case study.

While other female employees as well as myself have applied for this practice [leave and flexible practices] to help meet our family responsibilities, we were not allowed to take-up these practices... they are reserved for those having *Wasta*...if you have a personal relationship with top management, you could gain any benefit within this organisation. (Employee 8).

The TeleCom could accept the use of Part-time working of long leave practice by individuals in order to meet their family responsibilities but this is not an important objective of the TeleCom. The TeleCom functions according to other criteria, such as through the existence of *Wasta* (see section 6.5). Reducing working hours or taking up long leave or annul leave are of less concern for men because "the workplace is their life."

The majority of men, and I, will not think about this flexible option or many long leave policies because what we will do in our time, staying

at home! Our life is working... I can accept such an option in the case that I am working in another place. (Employees 6 and 12).

In line with some studies in developing countries, men see that the workplace is their main focus of life, and give it preference over family life (cf Chandra, 2012; Spector et al., 2004). This is a reflection of male gender culture and also individual choices in Arab society in which men do not see working life and family life in conflict, but as complementing each other. The negative impact of using these WLB practices on individual promotions appears to hinder male mobility.

The priority in promotion and rewards was given to employees who were working full-time...like many men I will not use flexible policies after that because it will impact negatively on my annual evaluation. (Employee 11).

I take emergency and annual leave but for vital need because line manager and organisation policies see user of these policies as less loyal to organisation, and so income and promotion will be effected badly. (Employee 13).

Most males interviewed outlined here strongly their lesser use of “flexible” policies because of career orientations, and concern about losing opportunities to improve their skills, as well as a reduction in prospects for promotion. This kind of concern has been found among male employees in many Western countries such as the UK (Sheridan, 2004; Atkinson and Hall, 2009). Economic uncertainty in the Palestine job market increases individual concerns about job security, and also leads to less take-up of WLB practices in the TeleCom. A number of women in the research however, offered various viewpoints, for example:

After marriage, working long hours is difficult to manage because of the need of my children and husband...I will not accept any offer that could limit my chance to leave work early or to have new responsibilities even if this to be a manager. I wish to work part-time to look after my family. (Employee 1).

Women are less concerned about promotion and career development because they perceive that the “main job of women” is caring for family and children - this is their main ambition within the existing masculine Arab gender culture (Aycan, 2000; Omair, 2008). This is not always typically the case in many Western countries and especially in Scandinavia, US and Australia where women have greater concern about their promotion and career development (Drago and

Tseng, 2003; Ginn et al., 1996). Men in the present study were less concerned about flexible policies, seeing them as having a negative impact upon level of income:

Why take these practices and risk losing my promotion and reducing my earnings, the monthly income? I have a lot of responsibility to fulfil such as my son's tuition fees, mortgage, and saving for future and so on. (Employee 12).

Perceptions of most of the male employees interviewed are that part-time working lies outside of their area of primary concern. This same is found in many Western countries (Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Sheridan, 2004). Nevertheless, the concern about financial matters is greater in the current research, reflecting the fact that men in Arab cultures are under strong financial responsibilities such as securing money for the future of their children. It is also the main role of men, that of *“going outside and collect Rezzek [money]”* (Employee 4). This is not typically the case for most of women interviewed – for example:

Flexible policies are vital to me and many other women because I have two children at home. Money is important for me but less than my family and children's needs... (Employee 14).

I use to take all of my vacations to be with my husband and children... even if the use of them impacted on my promotion in the organisation and; and even if this will affect also my salary in the future. (Employee 2).

Notwithstanding the negative effect of many WLB practices on their long-term income prospects, women generally stated that part-time and leave practices were crucial for them in order to satisfy their family needs. The demand for and use of flexible policies for childcare and domestic matters, as is the case with many women in Europe (Smith and Gardner, 2007; Allen, 2001), enables women to have the satisfaction of being members of the workforce and so be productive individuals in their own right, as opposed to merely staying at home. This is reflected to some extent in the present study:

In addition to its benefit in helping us to look after our families, flexible policies are assisting us as women to continue as working women rather than merely housekeeping...We have now a sort of freedom by working outside and seeing people. (Employee 10).

The flexible WLB practices assist women to be both carers and career orientated; without this right, given the family responsibilities carried by women,

their husbands or family could oblige women to stay at home because, in an Arabic culture “the best place” for women, and specially after marriage is home (Hasso, 1998; Ayca et al., 2007). The flexitime practice is used to only a limited extent by men, because they do not usually have to cope directly with urgent family matters.

You have to work under this specific time schedule for example at 9:00am...Ok what about if something occurred out of this time, what will you do?...you will not be able to manage it...you have to find some other way to sort it. (Employee 11).

This is in line with many Western contexts (Sheridan, 2004; Prowse and Prowse, 2010), where the formal WLB practices are not working well in terms of the needs of particular individuals. However, some types of flexitime schedule which could work well in many Western contexts, do not seem to be appropriate for employees in the TeleCom, because of Palestinian cultural factors.

Working after 5:00pm [flexitime] is not suited to my family life because we are used to gathering in the afternoon and to relax before commencing our social life... Men are used to spending time with friends and family. But I and other women undertake family duties and prepare for the next day... (Employees 15 and 16).

Flexitime, or compressed practices, which could lead individuals to work after 5:00pm pressure rather than support individual life and family lives because they do not fit with traditional life patterns. This view is derived mainly from individuals who are married and have children. Users and number of non-users of flexitime practice asserted that it was vital to fulfil some men’s obligations.

Flexitime practices increase time to sort out paying bills, making shopping, having rest in afternoon...and doing social visits in the evening. (Employees 6 and 9).

Another man stated:

Leave practices are important for us to fulfil many male responsibilities in terms of paying bills, on the occasion of accident to my brother or sister, or other members of my extended family...and for supporting my neighbour at his wedding or in times of distress... (Employee 12).

The focus here is on male duty in uses of flexitime practices. There was no evidence of using flexitime practices to comply with family matters or some women’s responsibilities. Only a few males have used WLB practices to assist their children in preparing for school. This is a kind of male involvement in

women's roles but because this perception is limited to two males, it is difficult to argue that the male dominant culture is changing. The use of WLB practices by women workforces was however used to fulfil only the family and children's needs.

Part-time work helps me to manage my children and family's needs in different aspect of preparing food, clothes, and so on. (Employee 14).

Another woman stated:

Because we are women and have another job at home, we used to take all available holiday and emergency leave every month because our child might be ill or we needed to prepare the home and food because visitors will come... (Employees 8 and 16).

Flexible policies are mainly utilised by women workforces to fulfil their family needs. This kind of distinction between the genders in the uses of flexible practices may not be found in many Western countries (Crompton et al., 2005). In section 1, it was indicated that there was only a limited demand for Paternity Leave practices within the TeleCom on the part of men; given the limited engagement of men in responsibilities that are culturally reserved for women, this practice was not regarded as important in the context of Palestine by some half of the male respondents. For the remainder however, their standpoints were often quite different:

I need this practice and for at least a week ... many of my colleague and I used to take annual holidays in these days to help their wives...my family can help in these matters but that is not enough, I have to be in. (Employee 13 and Employee 6).

Many men strongly expressed here the idea that paternity practices were vital for them at the time of their child's birth. This could indicate possible changes occurring in Palestinian society where men have started to become engaged in supporting women's roles in a more direct way: this was more obvious across younger participants and parallels findings from Western countries.

6.6.2 Employee Take-up of Childcare and Financial WLB Practices

Childcare and Financial WLB Practices	No. of Individuals taking up WLB practice		No. not taking up WLB practice	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Subsidies for Study	-	-	-	-
Childcare Centre	4	5	3	4
Health Insurance	6	8	0	0
Sport and Leisure Facilities	6	8	0	0
Free landline and mobile phone	6	8	0	0
Hard situation financial support	2	1	4	7
Refurbishment and building houses after Wars	1	1	5	7

Table 19: Take Up of Childcare and Financial WLB Practices in the TeleCom

The table above shows that most of the financial practices are used by most of the workforces in the current sample. However, despite the numbers taking up the benefits of full access to the benefit of healthcare, free mobile and landline calls are not always taken up, because it appears to be related to the principle of *Wasta* as well as to the position of individual in the organisation.

I used healthcare insurance and it is quite good to deal with issues that could be medically treated locally. To be covered medically abroad is difficult and it is available for specific people in the top management or if you or your family have *Wasta* with top management. (Employee 3).

As outlined above (see section 6.5 and 6.6.1) the *Wasta* tradition exercised by top management and line managers determines the use of many of WLB practices. On the Childcare practice, a number of participants who made use of the facility complained that the centre was not as well equipped, and was more expensive when compared to private Childcare. There are also in addition many cultural factors undermining the use of childcare practices by individuals in the organisation.

My wife is not working ... she looks after the children ... I am also living with my family in the same building. If my wife needs help then

my family can help her...In other words, Childcare is not vital for me. (Employee 13).

Half of interviewees underlined this perception; they stressed that support from the extended families reduced the need for Childcare. This is uncommon in many Western countries where society is fragmented and the possibility for a mutual exchange of benefit on a personal basis may no longer be so strong (Loewe et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the demand for Childcare is still undergoing a gradual expansion; but it is certainly now necessary for many employees.

Childcare centres, and servant at home are common now and available in the organisation and in the marketplace. Living away from extended family and also extended family is not always available, these practices are vital. (Employee 6).

Employees who made use of the workplace Childcare centre generally lived away from their extended families, and tended to use the organisation's facilities because the private Childcare did not correspond to the organisation's working hours. This finding is the opposite of the expectation generated by previous studies in developing countries (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Wang et al., 2008) – that Palestinians working under a collectivistic culture where individual and family work and exchange support among themselves, might be expected not to use company-provided childcare or other benefits.

Free landline phone, mobile and Healthcare are wonderful practices, not [only] for me but for a majority of individuals in the organisation...In addition to covering the cost of everything, and saving the money you would pay to have these practices, your family benefits from this practice because they can now consult a private doctor [without cost]. (Employee 7).

Most employees stressed the vital need for financial security, with no apparent differences between the genders. The general lack of any difference between individuals is because of the fact that the organisation's Healthcare facilities are used by entire families of an individual and not merely by the employees themselves. This is a consequence of a poor public health system in Palestine, as well as the financial concerns associated with this need (MAS, 2012).

6.6.3 Employee Take-Up of the Social and Religious WLB Practices

Social and Religious WLB Practices	Number taking up WLB practice		Number not taking up WLB practice	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Personal Phone Calls	4	6	3	3
Personal Visitors	6	7	1	2
Breaks for Praying	7	9	0	0
Hajj Vacation	4	4	3	5
Reduction in Work Hour During Ramadan	7	9	0	0

Table 20: Take Up of Social and Religious WLB Practices in the TeleCom

In the table, 10 out of 16 employees have used the personal phone calls and 13 out of 16 have the personal visitors, and the remaining participants wished to use the social WLB practices but were not able to do so due to many reasons such as the behaviour of line managers (see section 6.5). It also reflects the use of the social practices of favouritism, under the *Wasta* principles.

The *Wasta* is in everything and your position in the organisation; if you have the *Wasta* or you are manager or supervisors, you will get access to phone to outside number; otherwise, it is difficult to do so (Employee 5).

As outlined above (see section 6.5 and 6.6.1) the *Wasta* tradition exercised by top management and line managers determines the use of many of WLB practices. The level of interest in the Social WLB practices was not the same for all individuals in the TeleCom. For example, Personal Telephone Calls were used more by women than by men; women generally are more inclined to call their mothers to talk about personal matters, including their children. Men, on the other hand, made only a limited use of this benefit and were much more inclined to do so only to satisfy an urgent or important need. This differs from many studies in Europe where variance between genders in use of mobile phone in general was limited (Lemish and Cohen, 2005).

However, there were some participants who did not engage in the religious practices. The non-use of the religious leaves by a number of employees are derived from some personal factors such as travelling issues for Hajj (which for

most Muslims occurs only once in a life time). The absence of barriers for religious leave from the TeleCom is because such religious practices are part of the Five Islamic principles which are presumed to be fulfilled by all Muslims (Kamali, 2003). Consequently, there would be no impedance to accessing these practices. Concerning the use of the religious practices, there are some differences between the genders:

In Ramadan we are tired and need time to read the Qur'an and for Salah; and other matters relating to women in terms of preparing of food for the family... all this is necessary in our life... We should have a holiday during this month... for the last 10 days of Ramadan we must sleep in the Mosque, pray, and read the Qur'an throughout the night. (Employees 9 and 10).

This is the men's perception, which concentrated upon the use of religious practices to comply with Islamic practices. In addition to reading Quran and for Salah (prayers), women used the Islamic practice to prepare a large portion of proper foods, drinks for family and visitors during Ramadan at the end of fasting.

The Salah and reading the Quran is essential in this month, but also our life in Ramadan is very difficult because you are fasting and tired and also you need to prepare everyday a big meal for the family and the extended family who are used to eat with you during Ramadan. We use to spend at least 4-5 hours in kitchen every day during Ramadan month...sometime I use to have some days off in this month. (Employees 4 and 11)

Women might not be engaged as strongly as men in some Islamic practices. They sleep in the mosque, reading Qur'an less often, and Hajj later than men. The variances between genders here are related to the predominant male culture in which men still have power in most aspects of individual lives.

6.6.4 Summary of the Take-Up of WLB Policies in the Organisation

Most of male employees interviewed were found to be less interested in flexible WLB practices, for several reasons such as being concerned about promotion and career development in the organisation; numbers of these factors reflect those found in Western countries. Nevertheless, and because of unstable and depressed economic situations in Palestine, individual concerns about using flexible policies were frequently voiced. Individuals were sometimes also concerned about losing their job if they made "excessive" use of WLB practices -

which has not been found to be a salient factor in many Western countries. Concerning women in the workforce, the flexible and leave policies were crucial to satisfy their family needs. Having flexible or leave practices enabled women to overcome several problems, which derived from the cultural and lifestyle system of Arab society: women are expected to stay at home, or work only a short time in organisations.

The limited use of WLB by individuals was found because some were less aware of the TeleCom policies. Additionally, some policies were adopted by the organisation to assist specific highly skilled people, or who were served by the *Wasta* (patronage) principle. The principle of *Wasta* (favouritism on various criteria) is not found in Western countries, but is a traditional aspect of Palestinian culture, and did influence access to work-life benefits in the TeleCom. There were a number of employees who did not use the Childcare facilities available because of the existence of their extended family culture. This was however not the case for many individuals; the use of the childcare practice is increasing due to there being an increasing disjunction between the extended family and the individual; or an active desire to gain a more independent life. The entire workforce has a need for the leave and financial support practices, because of the financial difficulties they encounter in Palestine and the limited availabilities of developed welfare and health systems. These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, which attempts to integrate the findings from the two case studies with what is known about WLB factors in Western studies, and those from other developing countries.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

D I S C U S S I O N O F T H E F I N D I N G S

7.1 Introduction

This Chapter explores the main contributions of the study by connecting and discussing the research findings together with the previously reviewed research literature of Chapter 3. The findings of the data analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 have been used to answer the following four broad objectives of the current research: 1) what were the WLB policies in the two organisations studied; 2) what were the reasons for adopting WLB policies in the organisations; 3) what were the roles and the behaviour of the line managers in the uses of WLB practices; and 4) what were the factors determining the take-up of WLB practices by employees in the organisations. Answering these four objectives should, given the chosen methodology, contribute to a broader understanding of the development and content WLB policy and practice within a unique culture in which WLB has not been studied before. The study also outlines new factors influencing organisations to adopt WLB policies in the workplace. This research underlines also some criteria that the line managers utilised or were affected by, in giving individuals access to and use of WLB practices such as, *Wasta* principle and the individual shared political and religious beliefs. The study has also outlined the newly identified factors that have both influenced and hampered the development and use of WLB practices in organisations in the Palestinian context.

7.2 The Content of the WLB Policies in Organisations

In Chapter three, the literature reviewed indicated that the WLB policies in many Western countries developed primarily from leave arrangement policies, flexible working policies and childcare facilities which were utilised by individuals to balance their working and personal lives. For example, reducing working hours through the part-time system assists individuals to be in the workplace, to engage more fully with their families, as well as pursuing various vocational and leisure pursuits (Torrington et al., 2005; Eikhof et al., 2007; Bond et al., 2002; Glass and Finley, 2002; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Gomes, 2013). Nevertheless, this content of WLB policies was often found to be unstable, and their nature changed from one developed country to another, in the systematic comparisons, reflecting differing historical, cultural and economic backgrounds against which WLB policies were developed; and even within the same culture

different industries and organisations often had rather different WLB policies and practices (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Meulders and O'Dorchai, 2007; Hogarth et al., 2001; Maxwell et al., 2007; Bhargava, 2011; Chandra, 2012). In light of this, the study has sought to uncover and fill a gap in the still emerging theories of WLB policies by reference to the content of WLB policies in the new social and cultural context of Palestine; such a context has not been explored before in the research literature (see section 3.4).

The earlier two chapters of qualitative data analysis identified four types of WLB policies which are available in the present case studies of the MobileCom and the TeleCom organisations. These are: 1) flexible WLB policies; 2) leave arrangement WLB policies; 3) childcare and financial policies; and 4) social and religious policies (See sections 5.3 and 6.3). These four groups of WLB policies are presented in the following Figure.

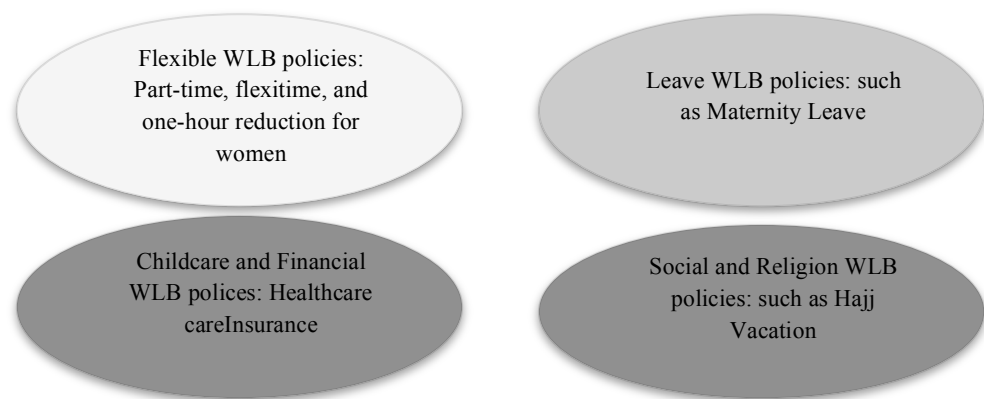


Figure 4: The Content of WLB Policies in the Telecommunication Organisations

This figure highlights the new structure of WLB polices (discussed now in detail) which has emerged from the current case studies. It is marked by particular kinds of Financial, Social, and Cultural policies which are highlighted according to their cultural uniqueness by shades of grey colour. The flexible and leave policies which exist in the content of WLB policies of the Western countries described in Chapter 3, are outlined. The lighter grey colour reflects their lesser importance in the current WLB policies of the studied Telecommunication organisations.

Regarding these four groups of WLB policies, there were only few differences between the two organisations. The paternity leave for men, financial subsidy for study, and financial support for family trips, were offered only in the MobileCom Company, and not in TeleCom. The Teleworking policy was also offered only in the MobileCom and not in TeleCom (see sections 5.3.1, 5.3.3 and 6.3.1, 6.3.3). This finding suggests that the existence of a number of WLB policies is related to the context of each organisation. MobileCom is working in the mobile phone industry, a sector that has enjoyed a faster growth rate than that experienced by the older landline organisations; there are now more users of mobile technology than those associated with landline phones (Hijazeh, 2011; PALTEL, 2011). This has increased market share and profits of MobileCom compared with TeleCom (see sections 5.2 and 6.2). This in turn, as supported by other studies, could in theory increase WLB benefits for individuals, since market forces, other factors being equal, could lead to more innovative and creative development of WLB policies because of available resources, and the need to recruit additional skilled employees (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Wood et al., 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002; Den Dulk et al., 2013; Cully et al., 1999). Contrasting with the TeleCom Company, the MobileCom is a newly established business, one that has been deliberately built around international standards of organisation. The business has consciously sought to improve its level of innovation and creativity. To do so it has focused more heavily upon younger staff, and a management team with international experience (Wamda, 2010; Hijazeh, 2011). The TeleCom Company has likewise sought to incorporate some of these features, but was still dominated by a more traditionally minded managerial team, one that is still working according to the traditional HR management system favoured by the Palestinian Government which controlled and managed the company before its privatization (Ali, 2007; Hijazeh, 2011). In consequence the TeleCom Company was less innovative and imaginative in regard to its implementation of HR policies. This finding is in line with studies which found IT organisations, modern management systems with innovative practices, are probably the first movers in terms of introducing WLB policies; IT companies are expected to compete in a highly dynamic and knowledge intensive sector, where the workers' autonomy and

flexibility to use their knowledge are central (Gálvez et al., 2011; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Heywood and Jirjahn, 2009; Bergman and Gardiner, 2007; Baral and Bhargava, 2011).

7.2.1 Flexible WLB Policies in the Organisations

The flexible WLB policies consist of part-time working, flexitime, term-time, compressed working, and some other benefits (see Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Glass and Finley, 2002) which are offered by organisation to individual to co-ordinate and arrange their working time with family and individual responsibilities and thus to enhance balance between working time and individual life. These Flexible WLB policies is not the same as they are in the current study (see Figure 5 above); they are offered in very limited scale and there is one new policy (One Hour reduction for women workforce) which have not been found in the Western model of flexible Policies. These flexible policies in many Western countries derived from increased market growth and the 24-hour working system which consequently required a level of flexible working to reduce stress upon individuals and to increase opportunities to have a larger number of workers in the market (Den Dulk et al., 2013; Thevenon, 2011). This influence of Western WLB policies in developing countries is rather limited, as the current findings show (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). However, political factors, including Israeli blockades and restrictions, put restrictions on business and commercial transactions by Palestinians (PCBS, 2012; UNCTAD 2012; BBC, 2014).

Increasing the number of women in the workforce in the market, boosting economic growth, increasing the tax base, the decreasing fertility rate, and reducing workers' sickness absences are additional reasons for many organisations and governments in Western countries to make a strong case for adopting flexible WLB policies (Gambles et al., 2006; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Bond et al., 2002). The UK and Scandinavian countries have provided some training and incentive programmes to increase the adoption of flexible policies in the marketplace, and also to reduce business concern about drawbacks of applying WLB policies (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011; Hegewisch, 2009; Meulders and O'Dorchai, 2008). The concern of the

Palestinian Authority about flexible policies has not matured until now because the issue of the fertility rate and the shortage of labour is not the case in Palestine; for example, the birth-rate is still high in most Arab countries (Passia, 2004, PCBS, 2011). Given this, the organisations studied offered only a limited number of flexible policies and under a concern pattern in a gradual process of adoption (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). Additionally, the organisations had only applied them recently in the workplace because of some recent changes, such as increases in women's education levels, and their recruitment to the highly skilled sector of the workforce; and to a certain degree, the emergence of a Western individualist life style (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). These changes, however, are still limited; for instance, the percentage of women in the workforce is still, whether in the current two organisations or in the labour market in general in Palestine, about 20-25 per cent of the labour force (see sections 5.2 and 6.2). Because of this, both organisations applied only a few flexible policies involving part-time working and a flexitime system, and they were adopted on a limited scale. For example, flexitime working is offered only with one hour flexibility of working hours in the morning. MobileCom also offered a teleworking policy, but on a very limited scale; this policy, however, was absent in TeleCom (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). This finding is in line with other studies in Spain, India, and China which pointed to the limited adoption of flexible policies because of 'plentiful' labour supply, and reflected a variety of cultural, political, economic and social factors (Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009; Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011).

The present study has indicated rather low levels of concern about the balance between working and family lives in the two telecommunication organisations studied in Palestine, and this appears to reflect the fact that most workers, who are usually men, believe that work does not conflict with family life. Rather, and in line with studies in India and China, individuals seem to be satisfied with longer working hours (provided there is adequate remuneration), because working and personal lives complement each other. When individuals spend a long time in the workplace, they will collect more money and get further promotion and position in the organisation as well as in the society; this in turn will reflect positively upon welfare level of the individual family and this

complements the more direct contribution to family life. If any conflict occurs between the two, work is given priority over family life and this is simply because this is, normatively speaking, how roles are prioritized in a variety of cultural settings, with women's roles being more home-focussed (Wang et al., 2008; Spector et al., 2004) (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). Researchers in developing countries have found a limited relationship between flexible policies and reducing the conflict between work and personal life in comparison with many Western countries, which have been found to have positive relationships (Spector et al., 2004; Idiagbon-Oke and Oke, 2011). Reflecting this, the adoption of flexible policies by organisations (including the two in the present study) is limited to part-time and flexitime policies only, to fulfil the needs of the mainly women workforces (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). In many Western contexts, however, and because the culture is built upon a life style system in which work and personal life have increasingly equal status, the existence of many flexible policies is demanded in terms of flexitime, term-time, compressed working, and other policies. These are vital for many individuals in the Western context for arranging their working and personal lives in ways which minimize conflict between the two (Chandra, 2012; Spector et al., 2004). This different cultural style is derived from what has been termed "squeeze time pressure" (Zuzanek and Manhell, 1998; Stalker, 2014; Lewis et al., 2007). In comparison with Palestine, many individuals in some Western countries frequently live under this "squeeze time pressure", and they separate work time from personal life within a crowded day, trying to manage many potentially conflicting matters in their lives. In Palestine and also in many Arab and developing countries, business and individual life is not so often "squeezed" into separate compartments: rather, work, family and leisure roles are integrated, rather than being separated and potentially conflicting (Lewis, 2007; Obonyo and Dimba, 2007; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008).

In several countries studied by researchers, current flexible policies for WLB to some extent accommodate women's interests, although feminist critics argue that there are still, in Europe, many reforms yet to be enacted or applied (Crompton et al., 2007; Hantrais, 2000; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014). In Palestine the movement towards meeting women's interests can be observed in

the emergence of part-time working to accommodate some of the needs of the female workforce. This was true to a certain extent in the Palestinian case studies, including the policy of a one-hour reduction every day for women's working hours in the winter season (see sections 5.3.1 and 6.3.1). This one-hour reduction is a new flexible policy, and has not been described before in the research literature. This policy derives from the Islamic belief that women need to be protected, in both family and work roles: for example, they are not expected to go outside alone during darkness. Women are supposed to be accompanied by *Mahram* referring to those males whom a woman cannot marry (e.g. a brother). Palestinian society, like other Arabic cultures, has strong values concerning the modesty and protection of women, principles derived both from the Holy Qur'an, and the Hadith of the Blessed Prophet. But in addition, there is a strong Masculine Gender culture of Arab society in which men are the main breadwinner, and women's roles are more focussed on the home (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Kabasakal and Bodur, 2002). This gender segregation was typically found in the past in many Western countries, and this in turn led to the emergence of "family-friendly" WLB policies which were intended mainly for women (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Torrington et al., 2005). Over time, schemes by European governments took into consideration everyone who was employed and not merely women for improving gender equity, and so adopted policies to boost the economic development of the nation by increasing participation of both men as well as women in the workforce (Lewis, 1992; Hantrais, 2000; Crompton et al., 2007). In light of these changes in Western contexts, which are not typically the case in Palestine, many WLB policies were established to support the roles of men as care givers, although these policies are still atypical in many organisations. The name of family-friendly policies was changed to that of Work-Life Benefit policies to be applied to any individual whether for family or any other personal matter (Lewis and Giullari, 2005; Gomes, 2013).

7.2.2 The Leave Arrangements for WLB Policies in Organisations

Many type of leave arrangement were offered in Western countries such as paternity, maternity, parental, eldercare leave, sick leave and other (see Den Dulk et al., 2012; Fleetwood, 2007; Torrington et al., 2005). The nature and the

content of these leaves is not necessary the same as those in the current study (see Figure 5 above). Findings from the present study of two Palestinian telecom corporations, indicate that the right for men to have parental leave policy does not exist in either; men have only a very short paternity leave of three days, and it is available only in MobileCom. More interestingly, it was found that the existence of Paternity leave was perceived to be anomalous in the TeleCom because child care still perceived as a woman's role domain (see sections 5.3.2 and 6.3.2). This reflects the ethos of masculine gender culture which is discussed above (see section 7.2.1). In Nordic countries and some Western ones, paternity leave has become more common, despite the resistance of many organisations. Parental leave is also available in many Western countries for both genders, and also exists as unpaid leave for up to a year in some countries such as Germany (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011; Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010; Ray et al., 2009).

Even though many leave provisions are dominated by the perceived need for having time for children, elder care is now emerging as a relevant issue for negotiating leave. In this regard, a number of Western countries have developed some leave provision for elder care, although this is still quite rare, and is still conceptualized as a kind of 'parental leave' (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2010; Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt; 2009). In both of the two current research studies, any kind of elder care policy was absent from workplace benefits (see sections 5.3.2 and 6.3.2) and this is not only because Palestine is still in many ways a collectivistic culture where individuals are supposed to help elderly people (Nydell, 2002); it is also because in Palestinian Islamic culture specifying days for a parent's care is unacceptable: every day should be dedicated to elder care. It is not acceptable by Islam to consider or to celebrate on 'father' or 'mother' days because all days are for elderly parents, and there should be lifelong respect and care for them. Given this, such care will need to be carried out by all related individuals, and this is for an unlimited time (Doumato; 1999; Tafsir al-Jalalayn).

Female employees, in the UK for example, have rights for statutory maternity leave, the right to maternity paid benefits, and protection against unfair treatment or dismissal, and also the right for leave for child illness. These policies have been developed over time in various ways within Western countries, and with varying outcomes: for example, maternity leave is quite long in Germany and in Scandinavian countries compared with the UK and Spain (Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008). Differences in the period of maternity leave are related mainly to birth rates, and publically-funded welfare systems which reflect varying political value systems (Thévenon, 2011; Den Dulk et al., 2012). Women in the two Palestinian organisations studied have only 70 days maternity leave, and in addition unpaid, one year of parental leave (taken by mothers rather than fathers). There is no interest or commitment by policymakers in amending labour laws that support further WLB policies in this area (see Labour Law 2.6). The last amendment of the Labour Law in 2005 does not offer very much commitment to principles concerning maternity leave, parental leave, and other Work-Life benefits. This conclusion is consistent with studies in developing countries which have found that the common practice of maternity leave and other benefits is largely absent, in contrast to those documented in the US and European WLB literature (Gregory and Milner, 2009).

However, some Leave WLB policies in the two organisations are more developed than those in Western countries, with regard to four areas: emergency leave, bereavement leave, breast feeding, and honeymoon leave (see sections 5.3.2 and 6.3.2). These policies are found in many Western countries, but they are quite short and restricted, merely to fulfil 'atypical' personal needs. For example, bereavement leave could be in an unpaid format and offered for an individual in the case of one close, co-dwelling family member (Thévenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009; McKee, 2000). However, in the current case studies there is evidence that emergency leave, bereavement, and honeymoon leaves are applied on a larger scale than in Western settings, such as 10 days for honeymoon, and 10 hours for emergency leave every month, which could be extended. Such emergency and bereavement leave are also part of the Labour Law of Palestine; this also provides for women to have

long breast-feeding leave for one hour every day, for two years (see Labour Law, 2002). Based upon the findings of the current research, individuals need a long bereavement, honeymoon and emergency leave to satisfy the needs of not only their close family but also relatives and friends, in ways which are strongly influenced by the traditions of culture and religion. This is not only because Palestine is a largely collectivistic culture where individuals are supposed to help each other, especially in the case of death or celebration. This also reflects the principles of Islamic ethics which oblige individuals to look after one another (Metcalf; 2007; Nydell, 2002). The Blessed Prophet Mohammad insisted upon assistance to neighbours until the seventh one. If someone needs help you are commanded to be with him. The rules of religion also apply in the case of long breast-feeding leave, which is clearly approved of in The Holy Quran. When Governments and organisations in Palestine develop policies, they are often implemented according to principles of Islam.

7.2.3 Childcare WLB Policies in the Organisations:

In both of the organisations described in the present research, there is a childcare centre to look after children of employees (see Figure 5 above), and it is offered at a 50% discount for all individuals in the organisations (see sections 5.3.4 and 6.3.4). The Childcare centre concept is also found in Western contexts, whether offered by organisations or by governments, but in the UK and elsewhere in the West such centres are mostly provided by the private sector, and are very expensive (Glass, and Finley, 2002; Dex and Smith, 2002, Cully et al., 1999). But the existence of such centres was not expected in the 'extended family' culture of Palestine. Previous research would suggest that neither the government nor business would be expected to offer childcare policies in Palestine (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Poelmans et al., 2003; Gomes, 2013). Setting up a childcare centre is quite expensive, and it requires staff trained in child development, as well as managerial costs and skills. Such organisation would not be undertaken unless it appeared to be vital for the workforce (or for the image of the employer, or for paternalistic reasons). Yet the present study of two Palestinian telecommunication companies shows that childcare centres do exist, and they are both needed and are used by employees. Clearly a minority of married people are now beginning their lives

independently of extended family, for a variety of reasons, including those not of their own choosing. There are now a number of childcare centres in the Palestinian market; in addition to looking after children, these childcare centres offer some food preparation services for the female workforce (see sections 5.3.3 and 6.3.3). These types of businesses did not exist in the past because the majority of family members, were living and eating together. The movement towards individualism however, does not seem to have decreased individual obligations towards father, mother, close family members, and also relatives. As noted above, individuals accessing WLBs still need many leave policies to fulfill obligations towards their parents and extended family. This is clearly related to the Islamic principle in which looking after parents is seen as an act of zeal, which from a religious standpoint will help the individual follow “The Straight Path” towards paradise. For these and other cultural reasons, ties of kinship and the extended family remain powerful (Kamali, 2003; Sidani, 2005). The extended family culture is cultivated and revered for life events such as weddings, funerals, and births: in all of these the extended family unit remains ‘as one’, actively participating on all of these occasions.

7.2.4 The Financial WLB policies in the Organisations

It was emphasized above (see P.199) on the content of current WLB policies that there are many new WLB policies which enhance the welfare of individuals, and hence may improve individual lives. In this respect, many financial policies were offered by the organizations studied in order to assist individuals to manage their lives, with respect to education, healthcare, hardship and crises, family trips amongst others. For a number of reasons, outlined below, subsidies for study and family trips existed only in the MobileCom (see sections 5.3.3 and 6.3.3). These financial policies are however a crucial part of WLB policies of both the organisations in order to fulfill and harmonize individual lives within workplace and family. This finding emerged from both of the organisations studied, notwithstanding the fact that they are working within stressful economic and political situations in Palestine. Like the case in many developing countries (Wang et al., 2008; Idiagbon-Oke and Oke, 2011; Baral and Bhargava, 2011), in Palestine, there is a lack of a developed education system, health system and a developed welfare state. Parents have responsibilities to cover costs of

teaching, marriage, buying or building a house for sons, and much more. Most Palestinian parents are working to save money for the future of their children (Lundblad, 2008; Devi, 2004). In Palestine, there is the constant threat of aggression from Israel: three wars (not including the Israeli aggression of 2014) have occurred in the last six years. The consequence of this is the extensive damage for many employee's houses and properties, and the risk of death or serious injury to employees and members of their extended families. Numbers of employees have died or were injured not only from Israeli attacks, but also from fights between Fateh and Hamas groups. The two organisations studied have, in this respect, paid the cost of house refurbishment and they have also secured the lives of individual families after a breadwinner has been killed through external aggression. In other words, the financial policies of the organisations studied are vital in the current context of Palestine, as enhancements to the level of welfare of individuals, in ways which may reduce some of the stress they have experienced. These initiatives were offered in addition to those required by Labour Law. Most organisations in Palestine have been unable to offer such benefits.

WLB policies of the Western type described in Chapter 3 (see section 3.3) do not usually encompass financial WLB policies. Only a few studies have identified certain financial benefits such as healthcare premiums, and subsidies for study (Idiagbon-Oke and Oke, 2011; Bach and Sisson, 2000). These have usually been categorised as 'fringe benefits', or 'financial incentives' as opposed to being true WLB practices available to all members of a workforce. The non-existence of financial policies in Western countries is probably explained by the fact that individuals in these countries already have many of these financial supports from government programs. They usually have access to free, good quality education systems, subsidized health care systems, child benefits, eldercare, widow's benefit, and so on (Thévenon, 2011; Poelmans et al., 2003). Many Western governments are also giving loans for students. Thus, the existence of the financial policies will not usually have high salience in the Western nations, compared with Palestine and some developing countries (Poelmans et al., 2003; Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011).

7.2.5 The Religious WLB Policies of the Organisations

The present research describes new WLB policies which do not exist in most of the WLB policy models of the Western countries, particularly concerning, as outlined above (see P. 199), religious policies. The research has identified a number of policies in both of the organisations studied, such as, 20-30 minutes for prayer, one month's leave for the Hajj pilgrimage, reduction of working hours during Ramadan (the fasting month), as well as other concessions and benefits (see sections 5.3.5 and 6.3.5). They are offered in the organisation to allow individuals to comply with Islamic principles, and especially the five main principles, which are "the Pillars of Islam" (Kamali, 2003; Kamal-ud-Din, 2010). The impact of Islamic culture on business environment is not limited to these policies: Islamic principles also strongly influence many aspects of business practice, such as contractual agreements, and kinds and style of product (for example, in foods etc). Contractual business agreement might not be accomplished between two parties in Palestine if they have different religious beliefs (Abuznaid, 2006; Budhwar and Mellahi, 2007). Suspension of conferences or meetings during the prayer time is customary in Palestine as in many Arab countries, since individuals prefer to pray together, to earn more respect from God. In other words, the religious policies are central in the lives of individuals, and of organisations in Palestine.

Reducing working hours in Ramadan (when individuals take no food or liquid during daylight hours) could also be explained by the fact that the individual has less energy to offer during the long fasting hours. Individual work performance efficiency may fall, and absences from work increase. Given the right to individuals to practice Islamic principles which will increase *Baraka*, including reducing working hours becomes vital for avoiding unplanned absenteeism, having the respect of God. Many religious policies are also incorporated in regulations of the government of many Arab countries, including Palestine such as reducing working hour in Ramadan (Labour Law, 2002). In many Western countries, with the march of capitalism and the decline of the state church and the rise of secularism, "religious benefits" are usually confined to the granting of particular religious holidays for Christians, Jews, and Muslims (eg. Eid) (Gorski, 2000). The religious policies influencing WLB policies appears to be a new

finding, insofar as academic literature is concerned. There are some studies which have discoursed on the Islamic practices, (Abuznaid, 2006; Whiteoak, 2006; Doumato, 1999; Kamali, 2003), but only in terms of more general religious or cultural perspectives, rather than in term of HR management policies and their implementation in the workplace, as described in the current study.

7.2.6 Cultural WLB policies in the Organisation

In Figure (5) above, there are many new WLB policies which are satisfying individual needs to balance between working life and social needs. Individuals in the current study have a right to have personal visitors, and calling or receiving phone calls during working hours from father, mother, wives, friends, and so on. A father of any employee could stay for 20 to 30 minutes with his son and to have a cup of coffee within the organisations (see sections 5.3.5 and 6.3.5); it is uncommon that individuals in Palestine would concentrate on, or separate between these two aspects of life. It is less common in Palestinian culture to arrange meetings before visiting somebody socially, or informally; individuals are used to having informal visitors without previous arrangement. Even if you are busy, it is unacceptable not to meet the visitor. This is usually how the culture works in Palestine; individuals achieve different obligations at the same time (Hofstede, 1991; Aycan, 2000; Chandra; 2013; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008). Because of this, and concern about the possible misuse of these cultural practices by employees, the two organisations studied have set some relevant rules and regulations (see sections 5.3.5 and 6.3.5). The Arabic society is still less concerned about time than is customary in the West, whether in business or family life; in both of these aspects the individual in Palestinian culture has no rush or pressure to “be on time”. The social WLB policies for these aspects of cultural behaviour and obligations are largely absent in the Western context, and there are no research studies of WLB which have outlined any relevant policies, reflecting the non-polychromatic culture with a generally formal separation of work from private time (Hofstede, 1991; Chandra; 2013; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008). The various forms of social contact during working hours in Palestine would be regarded as ‘bad form’ in many businesses in Europe. This sort of separation derives from the pressure and ‘squeeze time’

pressure mentioned above (see section 7.2.1). The identification of WLB policies which accommodate Palestine's polychronic values and practices is a new finding in WLB research.

7.2.7 Summary of the Content of WLB Policies in the Present Research

With limited availability of flexible policies, and leave policies which are conventional in Western organisations, the organisations in the present study have concentrated more upon the policies which meet the requirements of an employee welfare system within a specific cultural, political and religious context. Some policies like, breast-feeding and bereavement leave were developed in order to fulfil social and religious needs of individuals in Palestine. This finding supports the ideas of earlier researchers, who suggest that HRM policies cannot be predicted or understood without references to the values and social structure of the countries in which they are developed, which explains the uniqueness of the Palestinian WLB profile identified in the current case studies (Gomes, 2013; Hogarth et al., 2001; Chandra, 2012; Thévenon, 2011; Aycan, 2005; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008).

These previous scholars have also argued that any theoretical model of WLB policy should encompass new policies in order to address institutional factors which are specific to certain cultures or nations, such as type of welfare system, religious characteristics, and social and political characteristics of the culture (Hogarth et al., 2001; Chandra, 2012; Aycan, 2005; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008). Some flexibility in WLB policies were offered (or were desired by workers) by the organisations in the present study, due to particular social, culture, and market characteristics. Some leave policies are essential but these are quite unlike those typically encountered in Western WLB policies. The financial policies were of more importance in the present context to make up for deficiencies in the welfare system of the Palestinian Government. These financial incentives have also been found by researchers to be motivating factors for WLB policies in several Arabic countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Libya (Alwabel, 2005; Angari, 1999; Au-Shaikhah, 2000; Al-Fares, 2011; Awad and Odeh, 2011). These studies, similar to the findings of this study, highlighted difficult economic situations, which appeared to increase levels of

motivation and loyalty of individual employees. Since many Arab countries are enduring considerable instability which hampers economic growth, they tend to offer limited financial incentives in order to improve the levels of depressed or non-existent welfare systems. The religious cultures of Islam are common across many of the Arabic nations. They all adhere to the same principles of Islam, which include one month's fasting during Ramadan each year, prayers five times every day, Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, Zakat (obligatory donation to Muslim charities), and other obligations such as the obligation to care for family members, and avoiding Haram (forbidden) substances and actions. These obligations apply to all Muslims, both Sunna and Shiah.

7.3 The Reasons for Adoption WLB Policies in the Organisations

Literature reviewed in Chapters 3 (see section 3.6) draws on many studies that have been conducted in Western countries to explore the reasons behind the adoption of WLB policies in organisations: and they point to many reasons such as regulations of government, the existence of the female workforce, and pressure from Trade Unions (Wood, 1999; Dex and Smith, 2002; Wood et al., 2003; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Den Dulk et al., 2013). These factors might be less likely to be relevant in Palestine because of differing demographic, political, social and cultural factors, and differing governmental rules and regulations. The research on the relatively unique Palestinian context has highlighted new factors underlying WLB implementation, not previously described in the research literature. In light of this, the study has sought to expand earlier theories surrounding WLB implementation.

Previous chapters have outlined six main reasons for applying WLB policies in the current case studies. These are: 1) social and religious factors, 2) internationalisation and networking, 3) rules and regulations of the government, 4) existence of women workers, 5) relative influence of labour unions, and 6) competition and shortage in skilled labour supplies (see sections 5.4 and 6.4). These factors are highlighted in the following figure.

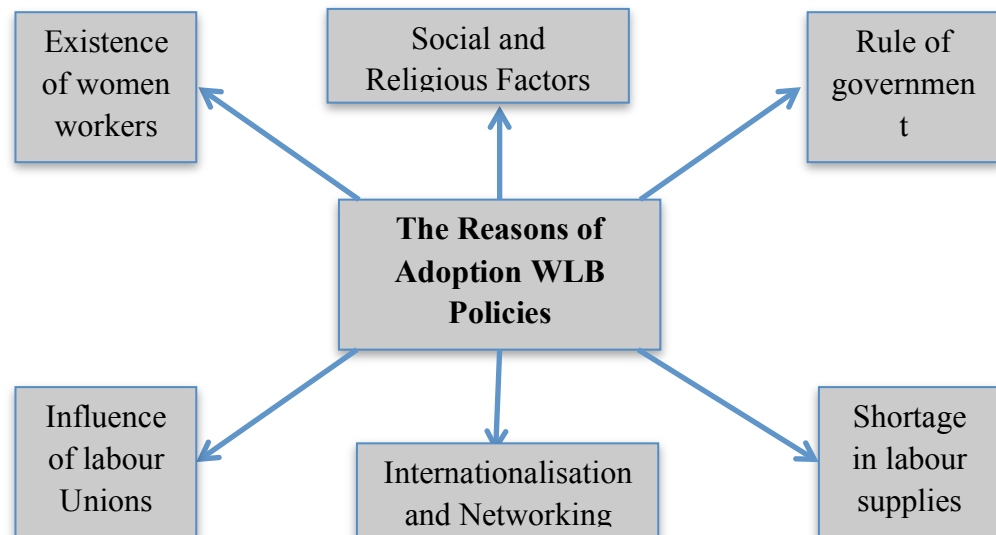


Figure 5: The Reasons for Adopting WLB Policies in the Two Case studies

7.3.1 Social and Religious Factors of Palestinian Context

As been noted above, the integration of the social and religious culture of Palestine and the natural integration between working life and personal life which each reinforce one another, is reflected in the WLB policies of both of the organisations studied. Workers could, for instance, drink coffee with personal visitors during working hours, or they could make personal calls when at work (see sections 5.4.1 and 6.4.1). Furthermore, religious practices were integrated into workplace routine, and WLB policies for workers: this included the integration of prayer times within work routines, Hajj (pilgrimage) leave, and accommodation of workers during the fasting month of Ramadan. There is thus an overt acknowledgement of workers' needs to follow the five obligatory pillars of Islamic belief and practice. Indeed, the organisations had no choice but to accommodate these religious and cultural policies, which are the norm for Islamic societies (see sections 5.4.1 and 6.4.1). The religious practices of Islam are among the most important elements in the Palestinian society, and this is emphasized by political realities, and the existence of a strong Islamic group in Palestine, called "Hamas", which has controlled the Gaza strip and also has many supporters in the West bank. Palestine is dominated by the collectivist culture (Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008) in which individuals belong to close family and group which the majority of them are Muslim, they are affected by them and

follow the Islamic pattern of this group; individuals are expected to adopt the Islamic principle of their family, and the collective identity of a group of people.

The theoretical framework in Chapter 3 was built on a review of Western literature, and thus did not encompass the socio-religious factors as one reason underlying the adoption of WLB policies in the organizations studied. The findings of the present Palestinian study are thus a new contribution to the theoretical framework of the literature on why organisations adopt WLB. The social and religious influences of Islam are essential elements in formulating research for understanding organisational business environments. These considerations should be part of any theoretical framework to understand the context of Palestine as well as many Arab countries, in understanding how business enterprises accommodate and incorporate policies and practices which aid Work-Life Benefits.

7.3.2 Internationalisation and Networking Factors

Both of the current organisations studied have contract agreements with Erikson Co., and other international companies, in order to enable the Palestinian organisations to offer services in different fields such as training and maintenance (see sections 5.4.4 and 6.4.4). At present, they have the best, and the most robust, area coverage in the region and they continue to incorporate into their network system all the latest technological developments (Ali, 2007). This technology, which both of the organisations are currently utilising, comes from Sweden and other developed countries (PALTEL, 2005; PALTEL, 2012). There are also international consultancy companies, which work regularly in both of the organisations and offer advice in different work fields. These factors together increase awareness and adoption of many policies such as paternity leave, flexible working, and childcare in organisations (see sections 5.4.4 and 6.4.4).

The current organisations are also offering many benefits and advantages which are not commonly available in most of Palestinian institutions, in terms of high salaries, WLB policies, welfare and long-term security. These benefits have developed in order to fit with the organisational ambition of being part of

an international business community. This factor, along with the general policy of organisations of recruiting workers with international experience (competing in an international rather than national labour market), influenced both organisations studied in offering WLB policies in the workplace; the two organisations recruited people who had strong international experience - for example, people in top management having work experience in companies like Vodafone and NASA; this has contributed to boosting the adoption of WLB policies in the workplace (see sections 5.4.4 and 6.4.4).

These internationally influenced factors have not been cited before in any studies; the Poelmans et al. (2003) study is the only one to have mentioned, this possible factor, but then only implicitly, in comparison with most regional organisations, The Poelmans et al. (2003) assumption that organisations that had co-operative partnerships with international organisations was assumed, but neither investigated nor tested. The findings of the present study are thus a new contribution to the current theoretical framework of Chapter 3, on why the organisations adopt certain types of WLB policies.

7.3.3 Rules of Government and Regulations

The labour law of Palestine has played a significant role in the adoption of WLB policies in both of the case studies: this was primarily in the area of Leave policies, for example, changes in 2002 and 2005 which supported adoption of Parental Leave, and number of working hours (see sections 5.4.2 and 6.4.2). This is in line with many studies in Western contexts such as the changes in the UK labour law in 2002 which increased adoption of part-time, flexitime, compressed working, and leave policies (many of which were driven by EU legislation) (Dex and Smith, 2002; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Mckee et al., 2000; Den Dulk et al., 2012 and 2013). In line with current findings, many big organisations in Western countries have deployed WLB policies to fulfil the legitimacy and reputation of their position in the market, in order to be known as one of the “good” companies looking after its workers (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Kossek et al., 2010).

Other studies in Western countries have however shown that regulations of government are less compelling in boosting adoption of WLB policies in workplaces, and this is especially so in small and medium organisations; these organisations are more likely to comply with their situational needs rather than with broader institutional factors (Wood et al. 2003; Dex and Smith, 2002). In US, the same picture was also noted in terms of there being less concern about the institutional factors of the labour law as reasons for adoption of WLB policies, This also reflects the situation in the US where “capitalism reigns supreme”; in consequence, issues of WLB policy are of less interest because US companies work within a strong capitalist system (Orloff, 1993; Osterman, 1995). In Spain also, neither companies nor the State offer much in the way of childcare, maybe because for cultural reasons, families are generally ready and willing to provide such care facilities. Neither the state nor the companies have changed their views of this underlying cultural assumption (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014; Straub, 2007; Poelmans et al., 2003). However, the weak influence of labour law apparent in the current case studies is due to the fact that issue of WLB policies is still new, and is not yet a core policy of the government. The influence of the Labour Law in the current organisations is not strong in in Palestine, nor in many Arab countries (Neal et al., 2005; El Said and McDonald, 2002; Leat and El-Kot, 2007) -although the law provides for some innovative practices, such as breast-feeding leave. It is offered by the law to reflect the importance of fulfilling women’s needs, reflecting what Islam encourages, such as women looking after their children and giving them a proper time for breast- feeding.

The findings of the present case studies outlined some progress in the role and regulation of government in business life. The labour law in Palestine is developing with increasing attention towards globalisation and network agreements within the international market (see sections 5.4.2 and 6.4.2). There are now many institutions and agents working on boosting effectiveness of government in all aspect of the lives of citizens. Auditing by governmental departments is now becoming more effective in inspecting customer services, quality control and labour regulations (Ministry of Labour). The organisations in the current two case studies are funded by public shareholders; when the

organisation was established it attracted many investors, both nationally and internationally. The government of Palestine also owns a percentage of the organisation's shares (PALTEL, 2005). With such a wide participation in the organisation's share holding, it is crucial for the organisation to be seen to abide by labour laws, since investors are prone to regard any unwillingness to follow such rules and regulations as a symptom of insecurity. Organisations which breach their own rules and regulations, or which fail to formulate such rules might be likely to break other more significant rules, such as those governing finance and good accounting practice; this has been found in several studies in Western countries (Wood, 1999; Budd and Mumford, 2004; Dex and Smith, 2002; Mckee et al., 2000; Den Dulk et al., 2013).

7.3.4 Existence of Labour Unions in the Organisations

There are two varying views from the case studies on the relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and existence of a labour Union in organisations. The standpoint of managers stated that the organisational initiative and care about employee was the key reason behind the adoption of WLB policies, rather than the role or the influence of labour Union (see sections 5.4.3 and 6.4.3). This is in line with the views of management elicited by recent studies in Western contexts (Prowse and Prowse, 2006; Kirton and Greene, 2005; Gambles et al., 2006; Hyman and Summers, 2007; De Menezes et al., 2009). These Western researchers outlined that even where the union was recognised, acceptance was compounded by a general accommodative stance toward the employer, and by absence of the need to negotiate over family or domestic benefit issues. Unions would be involved through consultative or informative discussions, rather than by collective bargaining. The shift to service industry employment, where unions traditionally have been weaker, has been a serious problem for labour unions. Because of this and the belief of labour unions that the introduction of WLB policies had the purpose of increasing productivity of organisations rather than the wellbeing of individuals, the role of labour union in Western countries has, apparently become more limited (Gambles et al. 2006; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Prowse and Prowse, 2006).

The manager's viewpoint however, might not give the full picture of the current nature of the relationship between the adoption of WLB policies and the existence of labour unions in organisations. This is because of, and consistent with other studies, managers might fear to outline the role of labour union because of their concern about unions' strengths in any future dispute between the organisation and its labour force (Cheng et al., 2004; Parry and Proctor-Thomson, 2002). Managers might not wish to acknowledge the reality of the role of labour union in negotiating WLB issues. This would reflect the paternalism of Arabic culture in which managers would like to be acknowledged like a "father" who cares about their employees and their families; they viewed any threat of a strike as a challenge to their authority. This is similar to findings in other "paternalistic" cultures. There may be a certain degree of self-deception in this managerial stance (Aycon et al., 2000; Cheng et al., 2004). Taking these factors into consideration, the viewpoint of managers elicited in the present case studies may not have given an accurate account of the role of Labour Unions.

Employees' positive viewpoint over the relationship between the existence of a labour union and adoption of WLB policies, are supported by recent research in Arabic and developing countries (PGFT, 2011; Gunavathy, 2011). These researchers have described the pressure of labour unions upon strategies and policies of organisations, including large institutions such as in Palestine, and the role of the labour union in the organisation in UN-sponsored institutions, universities other education sectors, and financial institutions which have sought to improve the level of individual rights, and increase benefits of leave policies (PGFT Unions, 2011). In the Telecommunication sector the roles of labour union were reported in some local newspapers (Al-Quds) in terms of their impact upon policies on working hours, financial benefit and hardship financial support. Unions also press management to consult with them on decisions about firing and punishing of any employee. At present, many labour unions in Palestine are now working together to improve standards living; the more powerful are those in the big institutions like in the current Telecommunication case studies; and educational sectors, healthcare, and financial sectors. Most of

them have engaged in strong action against employers and government in order to advance the rights and welfare of individuals.

7.3.5 Competition and Shortage of Labour Supplies

The present research indicated two contrasting views over the relationship between the adoption of WLB policies, and the possible competition and shortage in labour supplies in the market. Employees in the case studies said in general that family flexible policies were likely to be adopted because of the entrance of new telecommunication and international institutions into the Palestinian market. This possibility was ignored by most of the managers interviewed, who moreover claimed that “Our initiatives as Top Management” underlay the adoption of WLB policies. The role of increasing competition and concern about labour turnover was rarely mentioned (see sections 5.4.5 and 6.4.5). This manager’s viewpoint is consistent with a few studies which have also pointed to management’s “benevolent” decisions, rather than market forces, which have led to the offering of extensive WLB benefits (CIPD, 2009; Wood et al., 2003; Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008).

This standpoint however, contrasts with the views of many employees in the present research, and accords with a number of studies in Western countries; these have identified the role of competition in the emergence of enhanced WLB policies (Kirby and Krone, 2002; De Cieri et al., 2005; Milliken et al., 1998; Davis and Kalleberg, 2006; Hyman and Summers, 2007; De Menezes et al., 2009). These Western findings are supported by the results of the two Palestinian cases, since employees were often of the opinion that both of the organisations studied offered many WLB benefits (specially financial and flexible policies) because of their concern about losing skilled people from the organisation, who might be recruited by other organisations, especially the new telecommunication companies. This view is in line with studies in Western countries which found that many organisations followed their competitors’ WLB policies, subject to market conditions for labour. This is also the case in Palestine, but more precisely over specific skills rather than as a general pattern within the market; the current organisations are working in telecommunication sectors, which demand very skilled people with a strong background in English

language and management skills. Such skills are quite limited in Palestine (see sections 5.4.5 and 6.4.5). At present, there are several national and international institutions in Palestine who are all looking for the most skilful people from both of the genders. Even though there is a high percentage of unemployment in Palestine, these organisations could still encounter shortage in highly skilled people.

The pressure of competition is one of the reasons for adoption of WLB policies in the two organisations studied, because they are both recruiting for similar kinds of skills from a limited pool of qualified people. The organisations would not appear to offer many benefits unless they really encountered high levels of competition, and concern about turnover of employees. Organisations, from the Palestinian evidence, will not offer high cost policies unless they recognise the importance of these policies in the competition for scarce labour resources. Managers in an Arabic culture might prefer not to say that they were following their competitors, because they do not like to feel that they are under pressure. Asked about turnover, they rarely volunteered market forces; rather, they cited their regard for employees as a factor. Thus they would volunteer that the adoption of such practices was solely motivated by a desire to assist the workforce. This seems to be the normal style in the Palestinian culture, and can be seen culturally within society and political debates.

7.3.6 Development of Women's Workforce in Organisations

The case studies found an increasing number of women in the workforces studied: these women were often married, with dependent children. This clearly had an influence on the development of WLB policies in the organisations studied. There are now childcare, flexible policies, and one-hour of working day reductions for women in the workforces surveyed (see sections 5.4.6 and 6.4.6); this finding is consistent with many studies in developed countries (Wood et al., 2003; 2004; Dex and Smith, 2002; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Maxwell and McDougall, 2004; Mckee et al., 2000; Den Dulk et al., 2012). This finding is interesting and is one which, according to the literature, we should not expect in a culture such as Palestine and other contexts like Spain for example (Poelmans et al., 2003; Pasamar and Alegre, 2014). These studies suggested

that an increase in the percentage of women in the workforce increased the level of adoption of WLB policies, but this rise was enhanced by a greater number of women in management positions (Pasamar and Alegre, 2014).

The adoption of WLB practices, and especially expensive ones such as Childcare, reflects the difficulty of attracting well-educated women into the workforce. Such a problem ought not in theory to exist in Palestine where the availability of a workforce deriving from both genders is more than adequate to meet the demands of the present labour market, in a country which currently has a level of unemployment of around 38% (MAS, 2012, PCPS, 2013). One explanation is that women in Arab society have a high degree of responsibility regarding both their working and their personal lives. Consequently they come under pressure which in turn influences the organisation. Unless the organisation seeks to accommodate these cultural pressures there is likely to be a level of turnover and increased cost in terms of recruiting other staff, especially when the women employed have high levels of skill and linguistic facility. Such women (unlike men) in Arabic society are nevertheless under pressure to leave the workplace when working hours and conditions conflict with family responsibilities. Clearly, the women in the case studies came under pressure, which in turn may have influenced the organisations to introduce childcare and flexible working, notwithstanding the high unemployment rate in the market which might have been used as a justification for not recruiting women, despite their levels of skill.

7.3.7 Summary of the Reasons for Adopting WLB policies

This section offers a contribution to the scarce literature on the adoption of work-family programmes in the new context of Palestine, extending studies carried out in Western contexts (Kirton and Greene, 2005; Wood et al., 2003; De Menezes et al., 2009; Gambles et al., 2006; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Bloom and Van Reenen, 2006; Dex and Smith, 2002). The present results seem to support those previous studies in that the percentage of female employees, the existence of competition, and the role of government explain the diffusion of WLB programmes in the current context. This is an interesting finding because both the institutional and cultural context is markedly different

from that in Western settings. In Palestine the women workforce and competition in the market also impact significantly on company practice, and this influence could be more than in organisations in the Western context, due to some cultural factors. The factors which were outlined in Chapter 3 on women in the workforce, competition in the market, and shortage of skilled labour were the case in the organisations studied in Palestine. Both organisations applied some specific policies to accommodate the needs of its female workplace, to fit with its overall objectives.

In contrast with the limited pressure of the labour union in most Western countries, this factor was found to be important in the current case studies as an explanation for the adoption of certain WLB policies in the organisation. Furthermore these policies fit well with the increasing attention of society and government to improving the quality of life and development, through the impact of the market, which parallel earlier stages of development in some Western countries. Additionally, and this could be a new contribution to the current body of research, is the existence of a new factor, the influence of internationalisation within organisations strongly influenced by foreign investment interests, as well as the impact of social and religious policies factors; both contributed in increasing the adoption of WLB policies. The antecedents of existence of WLB policies in the present case studies are not limited to those previously identified by studies carried out in the Western context: there are certainly other factors which may explain why organisations adopt WLB policies in the workplace in developing countries.

This section thus, provides rich information about the context and the stance of various interlocutors (HR officers, unions, works councils, service providers) towards WLB practices. There is no previous case study research on organizational WLB practices in Palestine. This section therefore clarifies the most salient factors determining organizational WLB adoption in a particular developing country. This research offers what is hopefully a new theoretical contribution in respect of the reasons of adopting WLB policies in a developing economy within an Arabic and Islamic cultural framework. This theoretical model incorporates four influential factors which may interact with one another

in influencing WLB adoption: social and religious perspectives, and international and networking factors. It is hoped that this model will be explored further in new settings in developing countries, in order to understand the phenomena of WLB policies in future research. Future research should be based not only upon the Western theoretical models, which when naively applied could lead to missing many importance factors in the adoption of WLB policies in organisations.

7.4 The Role and Behaviour of Line Managers

The behaviour of line managers in many organisations in Western countries is a fundamental factor in determining the take up of WLB policies by employees. A workforce may be entitled, in formal terms, to make use of organisational leave policies, but the extent to which line managers may actually grant this entitlement is variable for a variety of reasons (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999; Todd and Binns, 2013; Leslie et al., 2012; Yang, 2009; Bond and Wise, 2003). Notwithstanding the growing research on this topic, there are still debates over the behaviour of line managers in organisations, in administering WLB programs (see section 3.7). In Palestine the behaviour of line managers has not been studied before, and might be expected to be different from that in Western countries, due to different social, and culture characteristics of an Arab context such as Palestine (Jogulu, 2010; Cheng et al., 2004; Neal et al., 2005; Hofstede, 2001).

In both of the organisations studied, employees were found to have less take-up of many available WLB practices, due to the problem of lack of awareness, or misunderstanding by line managers of many WLB policies of the organisations (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). Awareness of recent statutory measures for example was very variable, and was poor for parental leave in both of the organisations. However, awareness of other provisions, and especially in MobileCom, was better and this was probably because these benefits were well established and codified in staff handbooks (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). The disparity in the level of awareness between line managers within the same organisations, and between organisations like MobileCom, TeleCom, or organisations in many Western countries, derives from the level of effectiveness

of communication and training programs in such organisations (similar to the findings in Western and other settings – see Yeandle et al. 2002; Prottas et al. 2007; Bond and Wise, 2003; Dex and Scheibl, 2002). For example, line managers' engagement in training, or updating emails on WLB policy, was not always offered to some line managers. The MobileCom, which offered more effective training and communication programmes to workforces than the TeleCom, tended to increase awareness of their line managers, and boost the use of WLB practices in the workplace. However, dependence on traditional induction training programs of the TeleCom or its expired Handbook, might have led managers to be unaware of many newly emergent policies such as parental leave (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). As in Western organisation (Yeandle et al. 2002; Prottas et al. 2007) in the context of Palestine in which the phenomena of WLB policies are new, there is need for a full commitment and strong training programs to enhance WLB adoption and use within the workplace. Effective training and communication programs are also important here because many line managers in Arab countries prefer control within traditional working systems of 'Transactional leadership style'; they will not easily accept the new system which could reduce their 'Power Distance' culture and their control over employees (this is true in the Palestinian case studies, and in other Arabic cultures – see Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008; Jogulu, 2010; Cheng et al., 2004; As-Sadeq and Khoury, 2006).

Even if the line managers are aware of organisational WLB policies, their behaviour is likely to treat such benefits as a discretionary privilege according to different criteria such as business case and job and organisational demand (Todd and Binns, 2013), or the principle of *Wasta* as discussed now. Managers are 'managing' WLB practices in a limited way, and largely in an individualized manner, at a level that does not disrupt the usual way of organizing work and employment. For many managers, employees' requests to access WLB policies are often perceived as being in conflict with operational goals. The findings highlight the inadequacy of much of the WLB discourse that obscures the tension between, on the one hand, the imperative for managers to implement WLB more effectively and, on the other, organizational practices and the broader social, political and economic context in which management and the

organization are located. Sometimes the manager gives preference for individuals who are perceived as being more beneficial for the organisation, and WLB policies may be used in order to retain them in their current workplace - which was also the case in other studies in Western countries (Todd and Binns, 2013) (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). This is also reflected in the level of take up of WLB practices by employees in organisations, and employees' negotiation has become a strong mediator between organisational policies and their actual implementation, as has been shown in a number of Western studies (Whittock et al., 2002; Kossek et al., 1999; Yeandle et al. 2002; Prottas et al. 2007; Kirby and Krone; 2002). In MobileCom and with more salience in TeleCom, employees were generally managed by the 'paternalism' or 'fatherhood' leadership style – the managers act as if they were a father looking after their children or 'employees', and helped them in managing their personal and family responsibilities in an effective manner: but this paternalistic style assumes a level of loyalty, respect and trust between line managers and individuals (Cheng et al., 2004; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001; Pellegrini et al., 2010). For example, in the present case studies if employees had similar Islamic and political beliefs as their line managers they would have preference in accessing WLB practices (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). This is a reflection of the Palestinian culture; the line managers survive within an environment in which the political, Islamic, citizen or refugee questions are important – for example, the struggle between Palestinian military groups has divided society into two groups: Fatah "Secular", and Hamas "Muslim" (MAS, 2011). Many Palestinian organisations are now less willing to employ individuals who do not have the same political colour as the manager of the company. It is also in some cases the line manager from the city who does not treat individuals from a village or who are refugees, in an unbiased way (or vice versa).

One of the characteristics which reflect the Paternalism Leadership style, is *Wasta* or nepotism, "the personal relationship between line manager and employees". It is one of the traditional principles which the line manager could use in utilising WLB practices, and this practice of "favouritism" was certainly is found in both the TeleCom, and even in the more internationalised company MobileCom (see sections 5.2, 5.5, 6.2 and 6.5). The United Nations agencies,

UNDP and international organisations that work in Arab countries, have less prevalent *Wasta* behaviour because there are clear rules and regulations for management and recruitment. *Wasta* is derived from a traditional ethic of mutual support and obligation, and has served communities well in the past (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2010; Smith et al., 2012).

The paternalistic style of leadership could play a positive role in giving social and economic support to individuals from minority or deprived backgrounds. It is part of the paternalism culture, which is derived from the ethical principles of Islam (Cheng et al., 2004; Kabasakal and Dastmalchian, 2001; Pellegrini et al., 2010). In this regard, the behaviour of some line managers in both of the case studies gave preference for older people in taking up leave arrangement practices, when their allocation faced “zero sum” dilemmas of finite resources (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). This behaviour is derived from Arabic and Islamic culture in which the older man earns considerable respect in society; it would be an indignity to ignore the needs of older people because society is built upon this principle. The Line managers in addition, in the current case studies, were given preference to women who wanted to take up leave WLB practices (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). The paternalism of line managers is in this regard reflecting Arabic and Islamic norms which respect the social status of women as caregivers within their families. Additionally, there may still be stereotypes held by male managers who regard women as less productive, and giving them leave to care for families would be easier for the organisation to accommodate.

Some degree of transformational leadership style as well as the transactional type, was also identified in both of the case studies. In the MobileCom rather than in the TeleCom the transformational style prevailed, focussing on the morale and motivation of workers through participation models. The management-centred, top-down model was more likely in the TeleCom structure (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). This is also the case in the Western countries in which the style of management and leadership were found to differ between the Social Economy business [support management style and WLB practices] and the profit business type [less supportive management style and WLB] because the history of the social sector has an accent on a social mission, with principles

of democracy, equity, and respect for individuals seems to be an important (Tremblay, 2012; Haas and Hwang, 1995). The difference is also the case here between the two organisations: this reflected the fact that the line managers in MobileCom were younger and inclined to a more modern Western system than those in the TeleCom. The MobileCom is also a well developed, modernised, more recent organisation, and was less influenced by older, autocratic management systems of Palestinian Authority as seen in the TeleCom (see sections 5.2 and 6.2). These factors along with the continuous training and development program in the MobileCom, compared with TeleCom, indicate that the transformational Leadership is more the case in MobileCom (a type of management style reported on by many other studies in Western and developing countries (McCarthy et al., 2010; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007; Barham et al., 1998). The transactional leadership style is, according to the case study evidence, more likely to foster individual morale through WLB access. WLB practices were more like universal fringe benefits, rather than rewards allocated by management as part of a social control or cultural procedure (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). This finding supports those of previous research (Barham et al., 1998; McCarthy et al., 2010). However, female line managers were not more favourably disposed to WLB access amongst female employees, but rather acted in their roles as “males” (see sections 5.5 and 6.5). In line with other studies, this is because women, and especially so in Arab countries, could be under pressure of male culture, and so they would like to present themselves as “male”, and highly productive in order to change stereotypes against them. Accordingly, in the case study evidence, they become “hard workers” and were actually less favourable to women’s WLB requests, than their “paternalistic” male counterparts.

In line with other Western studies, transformational leadership was associated with increased individual use of WLB practices, together with cooperation, communication, and trust between individuals (Leslie et al., 2012; Yang, 2009); this was compatible with a paternalistic leadership style which assists also in building a strong ‘family culture’ in terms of exchanging benefits and help between individuals, despite, in some cases the imposition of *Wasta* principles. The transformational style in MobileCom, and among a few employees in the

TeleCom, helped in minimising the issue of discrimination which could result because of the lesser cooperation between individuals in tolerating leave practices given to individuals with particular needs, as found in a number of studies in Western countries (Drago et al., 2001; Hegtvedt et al., 2002; Parker and Allen, 2001). The line manager, as shown in the present case studies, helped in building a strong cooperative culture in the organisations, which consequently increases and enhances the swapping of leave practices between employees at times of personal need; hence the balance between working and personal needs was improved.

7.4.1 The Summary of Line Manager Behaviour

In line with many studies of organisations in Western countries, this research has shown that the line managers allocated responsibilities, but also played a strong role in the adoption of WLB practices. This devolution of WLB practices to the line managers generally served to foster the potential benefits and impact of the organisational WLB policies in terms of retaining staff, competing in the labour market, and enhancing individual performance. Nevertheless, this was sometimes countered by ad hoc behaviour of line managers which in turn could have a negative impact upon individual performance, as has been shown in some previous research (Casper et al., 2004; Bond and Wise, 2003; Thompson et al., 2004; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007).

Because the WLB practices are new in both of the organisations, the adoption of them by the line managers proved to be somewhat inconsistent within and across the two organizations; along with other reasons there was less awareness of WLB practices, which supports findings of previous research (Harris et al., 2002; Wise, 2005; Dex and Scheibl, 2002; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2002). The present study also illustrates the behaviour of line managers, which sometimes caused a gap between intended policies and their actual practice in use by employees in the current two organisations. The paternalist (transformational) leadership style did facilitate adoption of WLB practices, and also fitted well the traditional Islamic humanitarian matters, reflecting *Wasta* (favoritism for certain groups), respect for older people, and concern for women employees. Additionally, the current studies underlined the existence of

transactional and transformational leadership styles in both of the organizations, and also their differential impact upon the level of the use of WLB practices.

The present case studies identified the most common leadership in one of the organizations, that of paternalism and transactional leadership; the contrasted transformational management model was practised by a limited number of managers. This is consistent with other studies in developing countries such as China and India (Jogulu, 2010; Cheng et al., 2004). Additionally, this study contributes to an understanding of the criteria which are utilized in managing WLB practices in the two organizations studied: line managers often used political and Islamic factors, age of individuals, origin of individuals, gender, *Wasta*, number of years of experience, as criteria in using WLB practices. Many of these factors which have emerged in the current study of two Palestinian organizations are new in the literature, and they would, hypothetically emerge in the case of other Arabic research contexts, because of the popularity of these culturally embedded features across most of the Arab world, which accord high respect concerning religious, political, gender and age attributes of individuals. Thus the present study's theoretical contribution could be used as a model for further researchers investigating line manager's behaviour in other Arab contexts.

7.5 The Take-Up of WLB Practices in the Organisations

Various factors were cited in Chapter 3 of the literature review which influence individuals in taking up WLB practices, and the managerial and public policy factors which influence the development and deployment of Work-Life Benefits. These are for example, male breadwinner life-style, gender segregated culture, career orientation, and job title in organisations (Sheridan, 2004; Allen, 2001; Charlesworth, 1997; Haas and Hwang, 1995; Leslie et al., 2012; Yang, 2009; Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Tremblay, 2012; Budd and Mumford, 2006). These factors nevertheless, did not typically exist across all of the Western countries: for example, 'breadwinner male style' was not at all predominant in the Scandinavian countries, because of the much more equal gender culture which pertains in such societies (O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003; Den Dulk, 2004). Reduced working hours to accommodate family needs of both men and women

was seen to be less used in France and other developing countries due to the fact that the normal working hours in France are quite short; and flexible working hours in India was seen to diminish financial rewards (Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011; Theïvenon, 2011; Ollier-Malaterre, 2009). Given this interesting body of research from previous studies, it was considered to be worthwhile to explore the topic of the take up of WLB practices in a new context such as Palestine, which has many unique social, cultural, political, and economical elements that differ from those of the Western countries.

In both of the two case studies, the findings in chapter 5 and 6 underlined that the actual level of take up of WLB practices are not predominant and especially in respect of flexible and leave arrangement practices. There are large percentages of individuals who did not use for example, part-time, subsidies for study, paternity and parental leave practices; only 8 out of 33 employees used part-time options; 7 out of 33 employees used flexitime and only 6 women utilised the paternity leave practices (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). This is not the case in respect of social and religious practices, and a number of financial practices; they received a high percentage of users. For example, most of employees utilised religious and financial practices (see sections 5.6.3 and 6.6.3). This different level of use of WLB policies derived from many reasons discussed now in detail.

7.5.1 Organisational Barriers

Individuals in TeleCom were less aware of the existence of organisational WLB practices than individuals in the MobileCom: this is because of the differential level of the effectiveness of training and communication systems in the two organisations (see sections 5.6.1, 6.6.1 and 7.4). Individuals' varying awareness of WLB practices in the two organisations is in line with the kinds of variation reported in a number of studies in Western countries (Baird and Reynolds, 2004; Kirby and Krone, 2002). The present study found that there was differential awareness and use between single people in contrast with women and who had dependents; the position of the individual in the organisation, and number of years of experience also increased awareness of WLB practices - less awareness was not been found in top management

personnel, and those who had long work experience (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). This finding, particularly in TeleCom, underlines the fact that professionals and managers are much more likely than those in other occupations to take up financial and social practices, and to control starting and finishing working time (see sections 5.6.1, 5.6.3, 6.6.1 and 6.6.3). In line with many studies in Western countries, this finding implies that some WLB practices were accessed by highly skilled people and not by the entire workforce (Baird and Reynolds, 2004; Kirby and Krone, 2002; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Leslie et al., 2012; Yang, 2009). The WLB practices are new in the two case studies, and TeleCom was less innovative and had less resources than MobileCom. Hence, the organisations could be realistic in offering some benefits for highly skilled people, and those who were of more benefit for the organisation. It is cheaper to limit the awareness (or availability) of expensive practices to specific individuals than for the entire workforces (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Budd and Mumford, 2006; Gray and Tudball, 2003).

Notwithstanding the fact that there is apparently broad awareness of WLB practices in both of the organisations, many employees atypically used the WLB practices because some individuals, mainly in the TeleCom, encountered the problem of *Wasta* (see sections 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 6.6.1, and 6.6.2). Individuals could have a relationship with the top management who could assist individuals to gain benefits, sometimes when the individuals bypassed their line managers. The *Wasta* pattern has been found in many Arab and developing countries, but it is not known in most Western societies (Nydell, 2002; Loewe et al., 2007). At present, the *Wasta* behaviour is decreasing and thus appears to have limited existence in MobileCom. There is general pattern within society and government towards reducing what is for many, unacceptable behaviour; there are now strong rules and regulations to manage and control this patronage behaviour, which can have negative impacts upon the economic and social development of nations (Loewe et al., 2007). Many non-profit and international organisations are also working intensively to diminish *Wasta* in order to enhance the level of growth of the Palestinian nation (MAS, 2011).

There is an additional obstacle facing individuals who wish to use WLB practices, concerning practices which were seen by management as being for

the female workforce rather than for both genders (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). This problem has diminished in many Western countries such as the UK and Sweden because the gender segregation between male and female is minimised, with legislative support (Crompton et al., 2005; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005 O'Brien and Shemilt, 2003). In line with studies in developing countries such as India and China, gender roles are regarded differently in Palestine: here a number of WLB practices mainly benefit women. It is likely that society and culture in Palestine will continue to reflect the particular status assigned to gender roles, and hence, the management of organisations will continue to see some WLB leave practices as being for women rather than for both genders. Changes in the nature of women's social roles are occurring, but in very limited degree among individuals of the current study. It may well be the case in the future but this will likely occur slowly, and depends also on economic development factors, such as increasing demand for educated women in the workforce.

7.5.2 Individual Barriers in Using WLB practices

Case study findings stressed that many individuals did not propose to use WLB practices, due to both individual and cultural factors. In both of the organisations many flexible and leave WLB practices were not harmonious with the male's idea of being the chief breadwinner for their family, and so they were reluctant to access WLB policies which might impair current earnings, and future promotion (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). Notwithstanding the fact that this conclusion has been found in many studies in Western countries (Kirby and Krone, 2002; Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Allen and Russell, 1999), the situation in the present study could be more intensive than in Western countries because of the bad economic situation in Palestine, and also because males in Arab culture are expected to promote and develop their roles in organisations and in society (gaining a more stable or prestigious position in society). Hence, men will accept the role of working hard to fulfil their 'head of family' role. Consequently, and in line with studies in developing countries, utilising part-time or long leave practices suited female rather than male role demands. Due to the increasing equality gender role between males and females in many Western countries, a number of studies found recently that women in the workforce are also

becoming less interested in using flexible policies because of their potentially negative impact upon promotion and income levels (Drago and Tseng, 2003; De Vaus and Wolcott, 1997). This is not typically the case among the majority of women in the current study; women reported that their primary use of WLB was to fulfil their main duties as caregiver (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). This is consistent with studies in developing countries such as Sudan, India and Nigeria (Wang et al., 2008; Kargwell, 2008). In Arab cultures such as Palestine, cultural norms still expect males to be the main earner for their family (Omair, 2008).

Decreasing male individual working hours was also not seen as a priority in the present study, since men saw work and its extensions as a form of social activity: "Being in work is better than with family at home"; and men often volunteered for extra working hours (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). Due to differences in how people across cultures view work and family and the priorities they assign to these two, the findings here were not those which researchers have found in many Western countries (Yang et al., 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Spector et al., 2003). These researchers reported that in Western cultures men often feel guilty or frustrated about extra time spent away from family. In the current study employees view working long hours as complementing family life, and not conflicting with it. In Arabic society, an ideal employee is defined as someone whose work is central to life, whereas in the Western case an ideal employee is someone who maintains harmony between work, family and leisure (Spector et al., 2003). This according to the current case studies, was not the case amongst women; rather women see long working hours and less availability of flexible and leave policies as a significant source of conflict with their role as caregiver. Findings in addition, show the importance of part-time and long leave practices for women, which enabled them to enter paid work roles with the blessing of their extended family (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). In line with a study in Sudan, WLB practices gave support for women to both participate and engage in the workplace, and to fulfil their aim and ambition as productive persons in both workplace and family (Kargwell, 2008).

It was also found that a number of individuals had not used flexible and other leave practices because they wanted to “bank” possible leaves in the event of unplanned accidents or occasions in the future (see sections 5.6.1 and 6.6.1). It is observed, and in line with a number of studies in Western countries, that the formal practices gave less control for individuals in tailoring leave possibilities to their personal needs (Sheridan, 2004; Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Prowse and Prowse, 2010). This situation could also reflect the collectivistic Arab society in which individuals are often called upon through extended social obligations in the wider family, and neighbours in the wider social system. Because of this, informal WLB practices are preferred, and in an Arabic culture workers potentially have a greater chance of meeting such obligations. Researchers in Western countries have pointed to the effectiveness of informal WLB as providing day-to-day control by employees of working and personal lives (Sheridan, 2004; Hall and Atkinson, 2006; Atkinson and Hall, 2009). This may or may not be the case in Palestine, and requires further research.

The finding in addition, illustrated the importance of the extended family culture and the traditional cultural system of women as homeworkers, reducing the use of workplace childcare among number of individuals in TeleCom in particular (See 5.6.2 and 6.6.2). According to scholars in the field of Arabic culture, this is a reflection of the traditional life style system in Palestine, which minimizes the demand for formal day care; this is not the case in Western countries (Dimba and K’obonyo, 2007; Heinen and Mulvaney, 2008). In some Western countries this practice is offered by governments and from an early stage of a child’s development, as in France and Scandinavian countries, reflecting a strongly individualistic culture which emphasizes, among other things, equality of gender status (Chandra, 2012; IdilAybars, 2007). Nevertheless, the present research does show the increasing take-up of workplace childcare in one of the case studies: such a practice is very important for female workers in MobileCom (with its younger workforce), rather than in TeleCom. This is in line with some studies in Arab and developing countries, where there is now a greater stress among the newly married on following an individualistic life style (Gunavathy, 2011; Al-Lamky, 2007; Jamal, 2009). Now some women in Palestine live some distance from their extended family (especially when Israeli policies break up extended

families through travel restrictions), and women with children often have to opt for childcare as part of a life style in which extended family support is not available. Increasing educational levels especially amongst women has also increased demand for the workplace to offer support once provided by an extended family, and for parental leave as a WLB resources. This parallels developments in other developing countries (Chandra, 2012; Wang et al., 2008).

Despite this gradual movement towards individualism underlined by the use of and demand for paternity and emergency leave practices by a few men such changes in male roles is still at an early stage, and was reported by only a few men in the present study (see sections 5.6.2 and 6.6.2). There is still a clear difference between the role of males and females, which is not typically the case in many Western countries. In many Western countries at the present time, both of the genders take days off to look after children (Thévenon, 2011; IdilAybars, 2007; Chandra, 2012). In contrast, gender segregation culture in Palestine still, in the main, prevails. Misunderstanding of some sentences in *Surahs* (chapters) of the Qur'an related to women and their role in public life (Metcalf, 2007; Kutub, 1982; Mohamad, 1997), impact negatively on women who face pressures not to follow career paths, but to remain merely as caregivers, staying permanently at home, with minimal participation in the affairs of the wider society, being subordinate to masculine gender culture. Changes have occurred in the culture of Palestine in this regard but not to the degree where one can say that there is major change. The role of women in the workplace in Arabic and Islamic societies is a major topic, which would be a fruitful area for future research (Metcalf, 2007; Kutub, 1982; Mohamad, 1997).

Many individuals interviewed in the two Case Studies mentioned their use (or potential use) of several WLB practices, such as emergency leave, annual leave, honeymoon or bereavement leave, financial practices, and social and religious practices in order to fulfil different needs which are expected by society and family in general (see sections 5.6.1, 2, 3 and 6.6.1,2,3). These benefits are for many employees, vital in order to support the need for caring for older people, and social and cultural activities such as bereavement and marriage.

The need for the various direct or indirect financial subsidies, practices was also found to be essential for the majority of individuals in both of the organisations studied; they highlighted clearly the benefit of these policies for their families to be able to access quality or private education system, health care, hardship financial support, and other benefits which were difficult to secure otherwise. This is consistent with the findings of a number of scholars in developing countries, where work-related benefits are the main source for supporting individuals and their families, due to weak economic, political, and welfare systems of the developing nation (Wang et al., 2008; Baral and Bhargava, 2011). This is the case in Palestine for young or old people; they all rely strongly on available financial policies available to their caretakers, derived from organisational WLBs, in order to fulfil family responsibilities. WLB practices are also crucial in order to fulfil social and religious duties (e.g. time off allowed for prayer, shorter hours during the fasting month of Ramadan, and leave for the Hajj pilgrimage). These latter are essential in an Islamic society, and because of the eternal nature of Islam, these may not be changed over the course of time, and will continue into the future.

7.5.3 Summary of the Take up of WLB practices:

Incomplete awareness of WLB provisions, nepotistic behaviour, preference for a more skilled workforce, and women workforce's demands, are the principle factors that determined the partial or particular take-up of WLB practices in the present study. These factors often created a gap between the aims of the policies, and their actual implementation in practice, which resulted in a limited use of WLB practices; many of these factors are concordant with results of Western studies (e.g. Dex and Smith, 2002; Budd and Mumford, 2006; Bond et al., 2002; Baird and Reynolds, 2004; Kirby and Krone, 2002). In line with the results of these scholars, the current findings underlined the degree of mismanagement of WLB practices by the organisations studied, and also highlight that the organisations overtly offered the WLB policies as a response to some perceived need – it appears that the prime stimulus for employers was to establish greater flexibility in retaining and rewarding staff, prompted to a certain degree by labour market pressures. Other influences include labour unions that were mobilising member support for WLB developments. The

organisations might take these factors into account in formulating their policies, writing them into the organisational handbook; however, they did not build a clear procedure in order to get these policies implemented. The current findings also give a fresh picture concerning the level of demand and use of WLB practices, and the reasons behind this behaviour of employees. The flexible policies are based more on specific gender needs, of the women workforce, rather than for men. It is also the leave policies were not particularly helpful however for males, who perceived levels of income and promotion as their primary goals.

The WLB flexible policies benefitting mainly women is a different pattern from that observed in Western settings. This could be acceptable for the time being in the current Arabic culture, with its typically male dominant behaviour. However, this model of flexible policies may not be suitable for coping with future developments; there is now an increasing movement towards a fragmented or individualised life style system, with less reliance on extended family support. The fact that Palestine is comprised of two separate parts, each living under the threat of Israeli control, has probably added to this family fragmentation (Tarākī, 2006). There should also be new policies to fit with the movement towards gender equality. The entire workforce has a need for many additional leaves and financial support practices, combined with leave allowances for religious practices which are already in place. The final question is whether WLB practices should remain as the main, or only form of benefit in a developing country such as Palestine, which does not have a well-developed public health and welfare system. Many issues surrounding available benefits have been underlined in the current study, and they could be used as bases for discussion in other Arabic contexts, because they all have somewhat similar religious, political, and gender issues as Palestine. This is, the researcher suggests, one of the theoretical contributions of the current case studies.

C H A P T E R E I G H T

C O N C L U S I O N

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the policies and the practices of Work Life Balance (WLB) in a new context, that of the Palestinian Telecommunication Sector. The previous Chapters on the data analysis, and the discussion have outlined extensive evidence about the content of WLB policies and the reasons for adopting these policies in the organisations studied. The findings also identified the behaviour of line managers and their impact upon the individual's use of WLB practices, and the level of utilisation of WLB practices by individuals according to a variety of characteristics. This Chapter will discuss and summarize the main contributions, which have emerged, including theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the findings. Potential future research topics, and the limitations of the current research will be discussed.

8.2 Theoretical Contribution

As the review of the literature (Chapter 3) has shown, increasing market competition, shortage in labour market supplies, stress-related illness from work, and decreasing fertility rates (with more women seeking to enter the paid workforce) are the main reasons behind the introduction of WLB policies in many Western countries (Fleetwood, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002). Many WLB policies have been introduced in many Western organisations, especially those which support women's participation in the labour market. These WLB policies have been developed primarily through leave arrangement policies, flexible working policies and childcare facilities, which are utilised by individuals to balance their working and personal lives. The flexitime policy for example, has been offered by organisations to assist individuals not only to be in workplace, but also to engage more fully with their families, as well as pursuing various vocational and leisure pursuits (Poelmans and Caligiuri, 2008; Glass and Finley, 2002). However, these WLB policies were sometimes found to be unstable, and their characteristics varied between developed countries, and organisations, reflecting differing historical, cultural and economic backgrounds against which WLB policies were developed (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Hogarth et al., 2001; Maxwell et al., 2007). For example, due to the tradition of limited working hours in France, part-time working is not common. This is however not the case in UK where part-time policy for example is common due to longer working hours, as

well as the need to accommodate women's needs (den Dulk et al., 2012; Thévenon, 2011). Given that the provision of WLB policies may reflect aspects of culture and social structure, the present study has sought to illuminate and fill a gap in the still emerging theories of WLB policies in the new context of Palestine.

Palestine has a unique culture and history, and social, demographic, and governmental regulatory features which are often quite different from those, described in Western countries. The WLB policies in the two Palestinian organisations studied were found to be focused upon financial, social, and religious WLB contexts, rather than upon the flexible policies typically found in Western settings. In Palestine there exist the following WLB policies: crisis financial support, healthcare insurance, war hardship support, time for prayer, time for Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah), and receiving personal visitors (see sections 7.2.1 to 7.2.5). Additionally, a number of leave arrangements and flexible policies which exist in Western WLB policies, were also found in the current study – in particular parental leave for men, and elder leave policies, but on a limited scale (see section 7.2.2). This is because of the masculine gender culture in Palestine which limits male engagement in what are perceived to be 'women's responsibilities'. Islamic values also require individuals to care about their parents, not allocating this responsibility to external organisations, or governmental agencies (Sidani, 2005; Kamali, 2003). This study also offers insight into the nature of a number of leave policies which are relevant for Muslim and Arabic countries, such as breast-feeding, emergency, and bereavement leave which are more developed than in the West, because of prevailing cultural and social norms, within the specific context of Palestine (see section 7.2.2). The following figure summarises the content of WLB policies of the current study

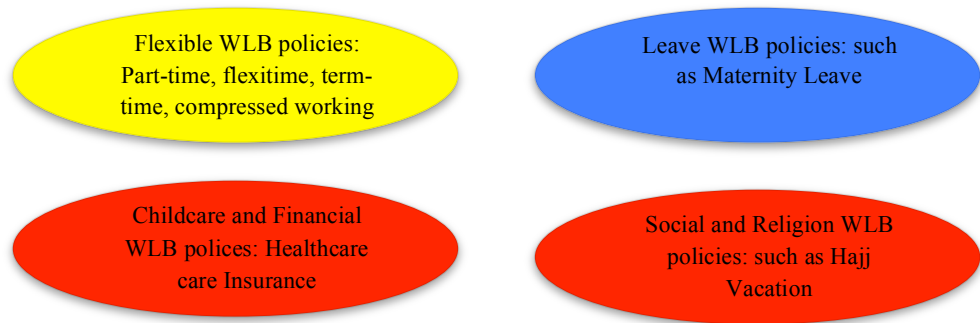


Figure 6: The WLB Policies in the Two Telecommunication Organisations

This figure highlights a new model of the structure of WLB policies which has emerged from the current case studies. The particular kinds of Financial, Social, and Cultural policies which are highlighted in red colour in the above figure are the uniquely essential policies that have emerged in the current study. The flexible and leave policies of most Western countries, which also emerged to a certain extent in the Palestinian case studies are outlined, and these are highlighted by yellow and blue colours. These two colours reflect their lesser importance in the current WLB policies of the studied Telecommunication organisations in Palestine. With only a limited existence of flexible policies and leave policies which are conventional in Western organisations, the organisations in the present study have concentrated more upon the policies which meet the requirements of an employee welfare system within a specific cultural, political and religious context. This finding supports the idea that HRM policies cannot be predicted or understood without reference to the values and social structure of the countries in which they are developed (De Henau et al., 2007; Den Dulk et al., 2012; Hogarth et al., 2001; Aycan, 2000): this explains the uniqueness of the Palestinian WLB profile identified in the current case studies.

The evolving structure of WLB policy in Palestine encompasses new policies in order to address institutional factors which are specific to a type of indigenous welfare system, religious characteristics, and social and political characteristics

of the culture: these new elements will likely be applicable as theoretical bases or elements for further studies in Palestine and other Arabic nations. In developing countries, organisations are likely to offer limited financial incentives in order to improve the levels of depressed or non-existent welfare systems. The religious cultures of Islam are common across many of the Arabic nations, who all adhere to the same principles of Islam, which include one month's fasting during Ramadan each year, prayers five times every day, Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah, and Zakat (obligatory donation to Muslim charities), all of which may be accommodated by WLB policies. This is also possible in Western countries. For example, according to a recent Australian study (Zav et al., 2012; Say et al., 2013) which examined how a sample of Muslim men adapted their work roles in relation to religious obligations and practices, it was found that there are now many Muslim men who for example prefer to reduce their working hours through the use of flexible policies in Ramadan, and also seek to have a holiday each Friday since (as in Muslim countries) this is the day of attendance at the Mosque for *jummah*, the obligatory prayers – rather than the conventional weekly holiday of Saturday or Sunday (Zav et al., 2012; Say et al., 2013). The same aspirations can be recognised in some cities in the UK: this is the case, for example in the city of Bradford, where many shops are closed, and the working life of individuals are suspended on the afternoon of Friday, to fulfil the Islamic practice of praying in Mosques.

This kind of example is certainly relevant in any discussion concerning the developing nature of WLB policies, and how these policies need to be applied in the context of multicultural business settings in Western countries (Zav et al., 2012; Say et al., 2013). My argument is that although the models derived from my study are built upon qualitative approaches of examining only two case studies in Palestine; the conclusions could be generalised and used as a theoretical framework for research studies, in international business settings in Western countries, and in multicultural contexts. Thus, my study develops a theoretical framework of the nature of WLB not only in specific contexts, but may also be expanded for international perspectives. This newly identified contribution concerning WLB policies could also be a basis for studies outside of Arab context.

This study moreover examined the reasons behind the adoption of several WLB practices comparing the many reasons behind such adoption in Western organisations including regulations of government, the pressure of labour union and the extent of women participating in the workforce (Wood et al., 2003; Hyman and Summers, 2007; Dex and Smith, 2002; Prowse and Prowse, 2006). This study has argued that those factors are likely to differ from one context to another within Western contexts. Many of these factors will be more, or less, salient in Palestine because of differing demographic, political, social and cultural factors, and differing governmental rules and regulations. The business case for retaining valuable individuals in employment, and enhancing their productivity is however important in Palestinian, or at least in the multinational telecommunications industry. However, the percentage of women workers in the labour force is quite limited in Palestine in comparison with many Western contexts (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Den Dulk et al., 2013; Den Dulk, 2005; Lewis 1999). Given this, the present study has sought to expand earlier theories surrounding WLB adoption, and offers a potentially important expansion of knowledge in this respect. According to the evidence in the preceding chapters, the Islamic faith and individual social relationships in Palestine have played a major role in the emergence and adoption of a number of WLB policies in the organisation (see section 7.3.1). Additionally, networking with international organisations has also been responsible for what may be termed the 'importation' of certain WLB policies in the organisation (see section 7.3.2). These factors along with others which play a role in the adoption of WLB policies in the organisation are underlined in the following diagram.

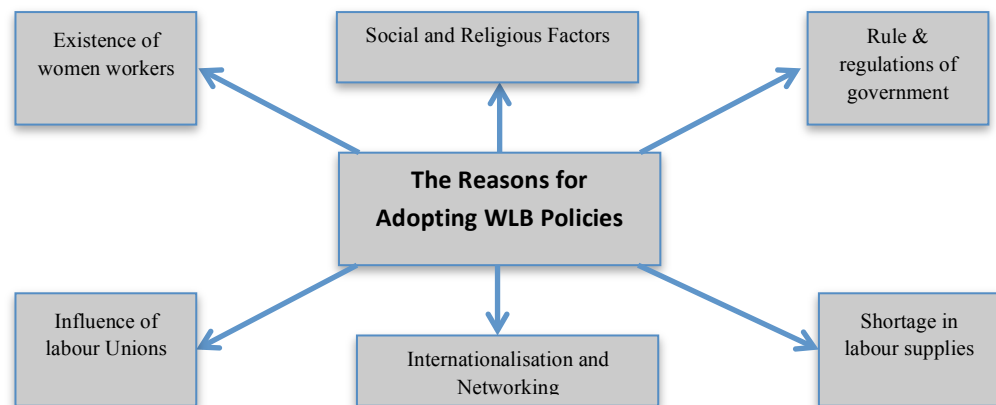


Figure 7: The Reasons for Adopting WLB Polices in the Telecommunication Organisations

This diagrammatic encapsulation of theory, incorporates several influential factors, which may interact with one another in influencing WLB adoption: social and religious factors, and international and networking factors, the latter having a strong impact upon building organisational policies. These are, in combination, new theoretical contributions in respect of the reasons for adopting WLB policies in a developing economy within an Arabic and Islamic cultural framework. In offering a contribution to the scarce literature on the adoption of work-family programmes, the present research extends causal models developed in a Western context. This new model, however, supports some work (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Den Dulk, 2013; Lewis 1999) on the adoption of WLB policies are not limited to business case philosophies of enhancing business performance; rather the organisations studied offered many WLB policies because of religious and cultural factors which were not intrinsically beneficial for organisations, such as receiving personal visitors, and using phones for personal use for quite lengthy periods during office hours. Understanding the social and religious obligations which employers feel the need to accept, will be valuable guides to multinational companies investing in, and setting up businesses, in Arabic countries. The current findings also point to the importance of understanding and considering different levels of general social, cultural, religious systems of any society for understanding the reason behind the need to adopt particular HR

policies within a nation. Misunderstanding some factors could lead to significant difficulties in multinational development.

This research additionally supported previous studies in Western countries on the importance of the percentage of female employees (Hyman and Summers, 2007), the existence of market competition for highly skilled labour (Dex and Smith, 2002), and the role of government (Maxwell and McDougall, 2004), in explaining the diffusion of WLB programmes in the current context. This in itself is an interesting finding, given that both institutional and cultural factors are markedly different from those in Western settings. In fact, in Palestine the female workforce impacted significantly on company practice, probably more so than in organisations in the Western context. This is due to cultural factors concerning the women workforces, with societal norms which pressure well-educated women not to give up homemaking and child care roles, even when they occupy work roles outside of the home. Without some flexibility in the WLB system, the women (who in Telecom industries have valuable skills and experience) might leave the workforce permanently, and this is the case even where women remain a relatively small percentage of the labour market in comparison with those in Western countries. In contrast with the limited influence of labour unions in a number of Western studies (Hyman and Summers, 2007; Prowse and Prowse, 2006), such influence was found to be important in the current case studies as an explanation for the adoption of certain WLB policies; the explanation of this influence does reflect a free market with freedom to negotiate by labour unions in Palestine.

This study clarifies the most salient factors determining organizational WLB adoption in a particular developing country. It has extended existing knowledge of the relationship between macro level conditions and developments in HRM policies within organizations: the development of WLB policies is not limited to business case philosophy but also involves the institutional pressures of the cultural context. The present study in addition, makes several contributions in the field of work-life research. It provides rich information about the context and the stance of various interlocutors (unions, works councils, Labour Laws, service providers) towards WLB practices. There is in fact no previous case study

research on organizational WLB practices in Palestine, and none which have employed a detailed methodology in describing any Arabic society. This section therefore offers the basis for further research on the most salient factors determining organizational WLB adoption in developing countries in the Middle East.

The role and the behaviour of line managers regarding the WLB practices are also considered in the current case studies. Investigations in Western countries have found that the line managers play a fundamental part in determining the take up of WLB policies by employees; the line manager is represented as a mediator or gatekeeper between what is offered by the organisation, and the application of WLB practices and their take-up by employees (Bond and Wise, 2003; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). A workforce may be entitled, in formal terms, to access and make use of organisational leave policies, but the extent to which line managers may actually grant this entitlement is variable. Many line managers for example, could see the WLB practices as a factor disturbing the practice of achieving optimum productivity in the workplace. They may play a discretionary role in terms of limiting the use of WLB practices by employees, and thus what has been stated by the organisational policies may not necessary be applied by line managers (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010). In addition to criteria regarding individual performance, line managers in many Western countries, may use gender and number of years' experience as criteria to give individual access to use of WLB policies.

The behaviour of line managers in Western countries clearly differs from one context to another, and from one nation to another (Jogulu, 2010; Cheng et al., 2004). Given this, within an Arab context such as Palestine, the present case studies found that organisations and their management viewed WLB practices in very different ways from their counterparts in Western contexts. The present research has shown that although the line managers allocated responsibilities with a view to meeting organisational goals, as in many Western Countries (Todd and Binns, 2013), they also played a strong role in the adoption of WLB practices in culturally specific ways. The behaviour of line managers is sometimes based upon ad hoc decisions, rather than on systematic or formal

procedures of the organisation for example, if employees had *Wasta*, or similar Islamic and political beliefs as their line managers they would have preference in accessing WLB practices (see sections 7.4). This is a reflection of the Palestinian culture in which the line managers survive within an environment in which political, Islamic, *Wasta*, citizen or refugee questions are important. Sometimes this paternalist leadership style in facilitating adoption of WLB practices reflects traditional Islamic humanitarian matters, and assisting old people and women instead of other groups of individuals is seen as ethically appropriate. Many of the factors described in this research are new in the literature, but would, hypothetically emerge in the case of other Arabic research contexts, because of the prevalence of these culturally embedded features across most of the Arab world, which accord high respect concerning religious, political, gender and age attributes of individuals. This understanding could be used as a model for further researchers investigating line manager's behaviour in other Arab contexts. Furthermore, these factors could be found in developing countries beyond the Arabic context. Additionally, the current studies underlined the existence of both transactional and transformational leadership styles in the organizations, and also their differential impact upon the level of the use of WLB practices. According to the current findings the most common leadership in one of the organizations was that of paternalism, and transactional leadership. The transformational model was practised by a limited number of managers. Such a finding has not been identified before in the Palestinian context.

One of the important objectives of the current study was to examine the level of demand and use of WLB practices by employees. In this respect, various factors have been identified in many Western contexts which have influenced individuals in taking up WLB practices. These are for example, 'male breadwinner' life-style, gender segregated culture, career orientation, and job title in organisations (Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Budd and Mumford, 2006; Gray and Tudball, 2003). These factors nevertheless, did not typically exist across all of the Western countries: for example, reduced working hours to accommodate family needs of both men and women was seen to be less used in France and some other countries due to the fact that the normal working hours in France

are quite short (Den Dulk et al., 2012; Thévenon, 2011); and flexible working hours in India were seen to diminish financial rewards. Given this interesting body of research from previous studies, it was considered to be worthwhile to explore the topic of the take up of WLB practices in a new context such as Palestine, which has many unique cultural, political, and economical elements that differ from those of Western and indeed other developing countries.

Incomplete awareness of WLB provisions, nepotistic behaviour, preference for a more skilled workforce, and women's workforce demands, are the principle factors that determined the partial or particular take-up of WLB practices in the present study. These factors often created a gap between the aims of the policies, and their actual implementation in practice, which resulted in a limited use of WLB practices; many of these factors are concordant with results of Western studies (see for example, Atkinson and Hall, 2009; Skinner et al., 2004; Kodz et al., 2002; Prowse and Prowse, 2010). However, nepotism should be considered as new factors in the take up field of WLB practices. In other words, the factors, which caused the gap between intended policies and their actual practices, are not limited only to those identified in Western countries. The current findings also give a fresh picture and theoretical contribution concerning the level of demand and use of WLB practices, and the reasons behind this behaviour of employees. The flexible policies used in Palestine were based more on specific gender needs of the women workforce. These leave policies were not particularly helpful for males, who perceived levels of income and promotion as their primary goals. Furthermore, the male preference is for their working life and a system of socializing outside of the home, rather than within the family - being a 'strong breadwinner' whose main goal is career development. The Palestinian findings therefore gave a strong indication that the flexible policies were more relevant for women's interests. This observation has been made before in any research study. A number of current WLB practices identified in the case studies did not in fact fit in with the needs of many individuals (particularly males) in the workforce. But certain WLBs concordant with financial, social, and cultural practices were vital for many individuals in order to comply with personal and family obligations. The entire workforce has a need for (and used) many additional leaves and financial

supports, combined with leave allowances for religious practices which were available. Many issues or factors surrounding the use of WLB policies have been underlined in the current study, and they could be used as bases for discussion in other Arabic contexts, because of somewhat similar religious, political, and gender issues. This is, the researcher suggests, one of the significant theoretical contributions of the current case studies, since it identifies a theoretical model underlying the development of WLB practices that could be applied in many contexts beyond Palestine.

8.3 Practical Contribution of the Research

This thesis offers an important clarification in describing the role of the mediation of the line manager between the intended organisational policies, and their use in practice by employees. It shows how the line managers managed and controlled the potential benefit of HR practices. This finding has implications in terms of the training and performance review of line managers: the WLB practices which were offered by the organisations studied in order to benefit employees were sometimes denied. There are several types of barrier which have been identified such as *Wasta* and nepotism, gender, and individual political and Islamic beliefs. Based upon this information, the management of organisations could develop specific roles and procedures to manage and control the behaviour of line managers. Monitoring the take up of WLB practices by HR departments along with the line manager could assist in this respect. The organisation also could establish a feedback employee system to highlight the behaviour of line manager. Involving the line manager in designing and developing policies that they will ultimately be accountable for in terms of their implementation and evaluation, could also be an effective way to enhance the implementation process of WLB practices in the workplace. This is of course in parallel with training and continuous workshop programs to enhance awareness and information about the management process of WLB practice.

This study has also identified practical policies for international organisations and consultancies that have an interest in investing in Palestine and in Arab countries. The study gives strong evidence about the appropriate content of WLB policies as well as the level of their demand by individuals which should be

considered in the Palestinian market, in terms of essential financial policies, and social and religious WLB policies. Having this knowledge by the international organisations should smooth their development and enhance their engagement in Palestinian culture. They can become enabled to invest in the HR policies which are essential in the Palestinian market, instead of bringing their own European or American policies which could be less effective for employees in the Palestinian market.

The present study also offers a fuller picture for national and international investors, concerning present institutional pressures in the Palestinian environment such as governmental roles, and regulations of workplace conditions and benefits; the role of labour union; levels of competition in the market; and the power of social and religious factors in Palestine. It is essential to consider a broader overview of the impact of institutional pressures of Palestine. This information is crucial for any new investors to consider in the short and the long-term concerning the development and organisation of HR strategy and development. Failure to recognize the power of labour unions, and the influence of religious norms and practices could lead to organisations being less effective, for example, in recruiting or retaining women workforces. The behaviour of line managers and the consequent impact of culture upon the management process are also emphasized as an important knowledge base for future entrepreneurs: international organisations could utilise this information when they are formulating and developing strategy and HR management systems.

The current study has also emphasized that the existence of formal WLB policies by organisations is not in itself enough to have an effective implementation of WLB, because many employees were not aware of the existence of relevant policies; and also many WLB policies did not fit well with individuals in regard to their negative impact upon an individual's income, promotion prospects and other social or cultural needs in Palestine. Given this, the organisation needs to enhance their adoption of WLB policies by increasing individual awareness by training or updating their handbook, and their model of electronic communication systems. It could also be beneficial for organisation to

consider other form of flexible policies for individual to utilise because of the lesser effectiveness of the current flexible policies for many individuals, especially those in the male workforce. The informal WLB policies inherent in an 'ad hoc system' (cf Atkinson and Hall, 2009) could be effective in this respect in order to overcome the drawback of the formal WLB policies, and might also increase the individual's control over time. The organisation also might apply easily manageable rules for each department without changing the whole administrative system of the organisation; this needs further investigation.

Provisions such as working hour regulations, maternity benefits, and leave policies have received continued attention in government-mandated provisions. Government's intervention to protect employees from exploitation, and in addition some cases employers' pragmatic concerns for their employees' health, safety and welfare can be considered as the major reasons behind introduction of such policies. However, it is seen that despite the recognition of the fact that WLB could create a healthier, productive and better motivated workforce, reducing work-family conflict, their implementation is not formally required through governmental regulations, and there is no governmental monitoring to ensure adoption of WLB practices. Given this, the policy makers need to focus on increasing the availability of such practices within organisations for all employees, regardless of occupational or employment status or training. It is also be directly, through tightening existing legislation or by introducing new legislation, that employees will have a right to request more leave arrangements, a request, which employers should consider sympathetically. Moreover, as noted above, unions are mobilising member support for WLB developments. Secondly, the finding that employees with the lowest levels of education, job tenure and organisation-provided training are least likely to have access to family-friendly work practices means that policies need to pay particular attention to the situation of such employees.

The research findings have also indicated that the women are the main individuals who are engaged both with 'work', and with managing personal and family life. This is because of cultural factors as well as the organisational and governmental systems which until now have offered gender-biased policies and

practices. However, men becoming both job and family-oriented is certainly compatible with Islamic principles. The current policies do not satisfy this purpose and it could be vital to adjust these policies in some way to increase men's use of WLB policies, and so increase their participation in and support for women's roles. This could be vital for women and for society; however, it should be noticed here that increased encouragement for women to be in workforce could require a general economic development in the Palestinian economy, which is not currently in prospect. Given this, the governmental proprieties in terms of legislating for WLB policies are not at this time, a priority.

8.4 The Methodological Contribution of the Thesis

This research has emphasized the utility and adoption of Critical Realism in the new context of Palestine – a theoretical and practical research model that was found to be vital in drawing a fuller picture of the realities of the situation, by recognizing the existing fact of institutional and existing theory “which is not complete”, along with other sub-layers of social, culture and religious factors; these factors “which are not the end” give a fuller story and offered a picture for the current phenomena of WLB policies and practices in Palestine. This process of analysis has not been utilised before in such a novel context.

This study also underlined the strength of the critical realism position in the use of qualitative methods in developing and building a clearer picture of the reality of the current phenomena; such an outcome could be difficult to achieve in using the quantitative or positivism research philosophy. In comparison with quantitative approaches, critical realism enables one to investigate and examine the theory of WLB in an unresearched context such as Palestine, where no previous research can be drawn on as a basis for generating hypotheses. A quantitative approach would almost certainly not be able to recognize the sub-layer of social and religious WLB practices, or the political context and its impact upon individual of line managers. Thus, this study confirmed from the methodological perspective, that in order to have a clear overview on any new phenomenon, it is better to investigate it initially by a qualitative approach: and the critical realism position offers a strong basis for further research.

From a methodological perspective, this study underlined some cultural factors, which researchers should take into consideration when investigating an aspect of social structure in Palestine, and in other Arab and developing countries. This research has identified the importance of the paternalism cultural style or “Fatherhood system”, and the influence and charisma of individual, prestigious figures in society, which has implications for research carried out in other Arab contexts. Managers who construed their world in this style, however, failed to present the power of labour unions and market competition as reasons of adoption WLB policies in the organisation. Managers presented different reasons behind this when interviewed by the researcher (i.e. not the ‘real’ reasons) – this seems to be a common reconstruction of knowledge in Arab and developing culture, since such frankness might undermine their presentation of personal power in the organisation, and in society. Women workforces also, according to the research data, also tended to underestimate their sometimes heavy use of personal phone calls, and personal visitors; this seemed to be because this might negatively affect their prestige in the organisation. These two instances illustrate that qualitative exploration of responses identify subtleties or obfuscation in response which a purely quantitative approach would miss.

8.5 The Limitation of the Research

This thesis has offered a perspective only from the Arab context of Palestine using two organisational case studies, with certain theoretical and methodological assumptions: this points to a number of possible limitations. First, albeit that this study offered deeper insights into the phenomena of WLB policies and practices in the Palestinian Telecommunication sector, it is uncertain, without further research (for which the present study is a valuable starting point) of the generalizability of the findings beyond purely Arab contexts. But, as mentioned above, my findings of the nature of WLB policies could hypothetically be generalised to international business in Western countries. Although the current research is built upon a qualitative approach of examining two case studies in Palestine; the present findings might be generalised and used as initial theoretical framework for studies and business in international business settings in non-Arab countries. Thus my study develops

the theoretical framework of the nature of WLB not only in a specific context, but also in wider perspectives.

Of course, the present study is mainly exploratory and descriptive in nature. This was inevitable, given the selection of qualitative methodology within the framework of a realist ontology, but adopting a subjective epistemology on which relevance and understanding were gained through the Critical Realist methodology. Although this method has provided satisfactory data to enlarge on some existing theories, yet the findings and contributions of the study should be read within the context that is “relatively” unique: further research could be carried out in different settings which might contribute to the acquisition of a deeper understanding of the studied issues. A quantitative research methodology could be essential at this stage (this is after establishing a strong background for the current topic by using a qualitative approach) in order to examine the current topic in a wider range of industries.

There is a dearth of research literature on Telecommunication organisations in general and WLB policies and practices in particular, in Arab and Palestinian contexts. No study investigating the WLB policies and practices in Palestine has yet been published. Consequently, the literature review in these areas of study is fundamentally based upon the Western countries. This could influence the findings of the study in that the review of literature from different backgrounds is probably unlikely to offer appropriate assessment to investigate data collected from countries with different environmental, cultural, economic and social circumstances. The different cultural context may make some of the data in the literature review inapplicable in the Palestinian context.

8.6 Future Research

While this study has presented results from the study of two telecommunication firms with respect to WLB practices, the findings are for the present, limited to these organisations rather than to other contexts, although the basic findings might well be generalized to other Palestinian and Arabian organisations. Therefore, future research is required to extend these finding and to develop a more thorough understanding of the context of Palestine in particular and the

Arab world in general. It is vital to investigate the WLB policies and practices in other industries and organisations such as financial institutions, educational sectors, public service institutions, and others. This type of research will be vital to understand to a fuller extent the WLB policies and practices in Palestine. Such further research (ideally by different researchers) would also test the credibility of the study's substantive findings and theoretical framework. Ideally too the verity of the present case studies and their interpretation should be tested using various kinds of comparative methodology.

Although this setting provided satisfactory data to enlarge the existing theories, yet as mentioned before, the findings and contributions of the study should be read within a particular context. Applying in future the same methodology as the present research but over different sectors of the economy might make it possible to determine both the similarities and differences which exist across the economy as a whole. Such research may both strengthen the findings of this present enquiry and take them further, into regions where they can be safely generalized. It is also essential to consider further research to be conducted by a quantitative approach, of utilising larger samples of organisations and individual workforces. Such a method may assist the understanding of the WLB policies and practices in Palestine. This quantitative approach of research could use (and perhaps modify) the theoretical framework of the current qualitative study.

There are a number of comparative studies that have given insights on the informal WLB practices in order to increase the individual balance between work and social life (e.g. Sheridan, 2004; Atkinson and Hall, 2009). The informal WLB practices could have a less negative impact upon individual incomes, and also increase individual control (cf Hall and Atkinson, 2006). However, there is no study which has investigated this question in any Arab country, and so it could be useful to investigate and understand this phenomenon in Palestine and other Arab context.

The current study has not examined the consequences or the personal impact of WLB practices upon individuals, and organisations; it has only investigated

the apparently determinant factors in using WLB practices, and the initial importance of WLB practices for individuals. It would certainly be interesting, and important, to examine the consequent impact of these practices upon individual behaviour and performance. This might be, for example, an influential factor in respect of individual satisfaction, commitment, and productivity, as well as the turnover of employees. The studies should separately examine the accounts of managers and employees, because each perspective might be expected to give different viewpoints concerning the impact of WLB practices because as underlined in the current study, in comparison with managers, many employees are less satisfied with WLB practices than line managers actually believe.

Further, comparative multi-site research across a range of different organizations (in a variety of cultural settings) could provide useful insight into how line managers influence supportive WLB environments, and would assist in understanding what determines effective WLB practice from the perspective of line manager behaviours. Comparative research designs would allow us to identify examples of effective performance by line managers in effecting WLB behaviour in different types of organization.

Future research is important in this area because of the rapid changes in Palestine in most of its aspects such as political, economic, political, and social. As emphasized in Chapter 2 on the context of Palestine, there is instability in the political situation and its effect upon economic development and the labour market. These changes could lead to increased or limited the adoption of WLB policies; also the power of institutional factors of labour law or competition upon organisations may change significantly. Given this, further investigations of the current topic in Palestine may become vital to determine whether changes that occur have an impact upon WLB policies. It has also been mentioned before that there is an increasing individualism in Palestinian life styles, together with a decline in the dominance of masculine gender culture. Given these apparent changes, which might have increased impact in the future, further research is certainly needed, especially into the roles of women and their participation in the labour force and in the wider society.

As an epilogue, the writer would add that in the chapter on Methodology, he cited the authority of Margaret Scotford Archer (2003), in justifying the model of Critical Realism: *"In effect we are seeking the still point in a world of change, a still point which, over time, will itself be subject to modification as the social reality it reflects undergoes change"* (2003: 155). The research reported in this thesis was undertaken at a "still point", a moment in time in Palestine's history, in which there was optimism for the peaceful and prosperous growth of this often beleaguered country. Since the researcher undertook this research, analysed the findings, and wrote most of the thesis there have been profound changes in Palestine, and particularly in Gaza where many of the researcher's extended family still live. Following Israeli aggression using rocket fire, tanks and bombs in July and August 2014 much of the infrastructure of Gaza has been destroyed.

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A P P E N D I X

Appendix (A): The Interview Questions

The four areas of research which participants were asked about are: 1) the content and structure of WLB policies in organisation, 2) the reason for adopting WLB policies within organisation, 3) the role and behaviour of line managers regarding the use and take up of WLB practices, and 4) the level of use and demand of WLB practices by employees, and also barriers encountered by individuals in not using WLB practices in organisations. Based upon these topics the researcher formulated the interview questions for both the managers and the employees. These questions however were not static, they were changed and modified according to each interview, but generally these are the main questions of the interview.

The following questions were addressed to Managers regarding the first topic of research:

1. Could you indicate the policies that are deployed within organisation with regard to assisting individuals to manage between personal lives and work demands? In other words, do you apply policies like these ones which are listed in this table (see appendix 2).
2. Are there any additional policies which are applied in the organisation and assist individuals to manage between their personal responsibilities and working life?
3. Why is your organisation adopting certain practices and not other practices?
4. Are these practices accessible to all employees as soon as they require them, or accessible only to certain groups of people? (For example, childcare, time off work for family reasons, job sharing)?

The following questions were addressed to both Managers and Employees regarding the second topic of the research:

- 1- Generally, what are the reasons behind the implementation of WLB practices?
- 2- What are the influential factors in implementing WLB policies in regards to your organisation's *internal* characteristics? (For example, foreign ownership, questions of gender, pre-established working practices.)

- 3- What are the influential factors in implementing WLB policies in regards to your organisation's *external* characteristics? (law, existing trade union pressures, the shortage of skills, or availability of labour in the local area).

The following questions were addressed to the employee regarding the third and the fourth topic of research:

1. Could you indicate to the practices that are employed within your organisation regard to WLB?
2. Are these practices accessible to you and you colleagues as soon as they are needed? In other words, how accessible are these practices to you as an employee?
3. Do line managers play a role in the case of accessing and the take up of WLB practices?
4. Do all employees enjoy the same access to WLB practices; and do all WLB practices policies apply to all employees equally. And if not, could you explore the reason behind this?
5. Do you feel any dilemma about asking your managers to be allowed to take up any WLB practices which they may provide? (For example, time off work for personal reasons, asking for flexible working times).
6. Has your view of the organisation changed as a result of the implementation of one specific WLB practices by your managers or employer?
7. As an employee do you use the WLB practices? If so, why do you access them (for example to look after children, helping your wife, looking after family and so on?) If you do not you the WLB practices, what are the reasons behind this e.g. as reducing income, has own family support and so on?
8. Generally, as employees how do you feel about WLB practices in terms of their usefulness and importance, the level of demand made by you; and any problem in their adoption (for example, it is not suitable for you

as men, or impacts negatively upon promotion; or family type and culture reduce the demand of these practices).

Appendix (B): letter distributed to interview participants

تأثير سياسات التوازن بين متطلبات العمل وحاجات العاملين على الإنجاز في المؤسسة

This letter was distributed to participants in the interview data collection. It consists of the name and the title of the research project and information about research and the Universities, which he is affiliated to.

البيانات الخاصة بالمقابل

العمر — الجنس — الحالة الاجتماعية — عدد الأشخاص المعولين — مكان السكن — طبيعة السكن (مع الأسرة الممتدة أم في مسكن خاص) — الموقع الإداري — سنوات الخبرة —

The above information concerns questions about participants in terms of age, gender, position, number of year of experience, and other information such as marital status, number of dependent, and place of living

List of Work Life Balance Policies and Practices

No.	The Name of WLB Practice	نوع السياسة	تفسير السياسات باللغة العربية	تطبيق السياسة (نعم أو لا)
1.	Annual hours	مرونة في العمل	ساعات عمل سنوية محددة	
2.	Job Sharing	مرونة في العمل	اقتسام الوظيفة بين موظفين أكثر	
3.	Term time working	مرونة في العمل	العمل فصلي	
4.	Working at home	مرونة في العمل	العمل عن بعد أو من المنزل	
5.	Part time working	مرونة في العمل	عمل جزئي دائماً أو عمل جزئي مؤقت	
6.	Flexitime work	مرونة في العمل	المرونة في تحديد ساعة بداية و نهاية العمل مع الالتزام بعدد ساعات العمل	
7.	Compressed work	مرونة في العمل	ضغط العمل. مثل إنجاز العمل في خمسة أيام بدلاً من ستة أيام	
8.	Unpaid studying leave	مغادرة العمل	إجازة دراسية غير مدفوعة	
9.	Paid and unpaid vacation	مغادرة عمل	إجازة مدفوعة أو غير مدفوعة	
10.	Paid Breast	مغادرة العمل	مغادرة العمل للحضانة و رضاعة الأطفال	

	Feeding Leave			
11.	Paid and un-paid Emergency leave	مغادرة العمل	مغادرة طارئة مدفوعة أو غير مدفوعة	
12.	Paid and unpaid Emergency vacation	مغادرة العمل	إجازة طارئة مدفوعة أو غير مدفوعة	
13.	Paid and unpaid Paternity Leave	مغادرة العمل	إجازة أبوة مدفوعة أو غير مدفوعة تحقق للزوج فترة ولادة زوجته	
14.	Paid Maternity Leave	مغادرة العمل	إجازة ولادة مدفوعة	
15.	Paid and Unpaid Sick leave Vacation	مغادرة العمل	إجازة مرضية مدفوعة أو غير مدفوعة	
15.	Subsidise Childcare centre facilities	بدلات و مساعات مالية	حضانة أطفال لموظفي الشركة	
16.	Subsidise studying Leave	بدلات و مساعات مالية	إجازة دراسية مدفوعة	

The researcher intends to ask you many questions related to the topic of WLB policies and Practices within the organisations. You have the right to answer, or to ignore the questions. However, all of your data or information you impart will be confidential; no third party will see or read your information. The interview will be recorded without considering the name of interviewees and it could take about one hour.

Thank you very much
Mahmoud Abubaker
University of Bradford